

# CAMPUS ACTION PLAN

CORNELL VOTES

A UNIVERSITY-SPONSORED  
STUDENT ORGANIZATION



**2020-2030**

# CORNELL VOTES!

EVERY PERSON EVERY VOICE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.”

26TH AMENDMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Over the summer of 2020, Cornell Votes transitioned from a small fellowship to a full-fledged student organization with an Executive Board, General Body, and Constitution. The Executive Board established three Departments: Coalition, Communications, and Community Engagement. These Departments collaborate to create and promote programming on campus.

Alongside the organizational transition, Cornell Votes successfully improved the institutionalization of voting on campus. In particular, our group collaborated with Campus Activities and Campus Groups to promote voting related activities on online platforms. We were assisted by two Cornell Vice Presidents and a multitude of campus coalition members in our institutionalization efforts. Additionally, Cornell Votes created infographics that were shared in dormitories, libraries, and dining halls.

### 2018-2019

- 25% increase in registration rate
- 27.5% increase of voting rate of registered students
- 25% increase in voting rate

*\*\*Data is compared to 2014 (NSLVE)*

### 2019-2020

- Formalization of Cornell Votes and recognition from Cornell University
- Creation of Cornell Votes Fellowship & Advisory Committee
- Establishment of Cornell Votes university-sponsored Student Organization

### 2020-2021 GOALS

- 90% Registration rate
- 65% Voting rate of registered students
- 51% Voting rate

### by 2030 GOALS

- Institutionalize and shift campus culture around civic engagement
- Integrate into various university systems and processes
- Host on-campus polling locations

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# Landscapes

## NSLVE:

From 2014 to 2018, Cornell University saw a 25.1% rise in its student voting rate to 33.7%, and a 25.2% increase in registration rate to 76%. Despite this nearly 300% increase in voting, Cornell Votes recognizes that our campus voting rate is still 5.4% below average and aims to change this in the 2020 election and all elections that follow it. Specifically, Cornell Votes understands the unique needs of Cornellians, such as the high number of students who vote absentee or by mail (43.6%), as well as student demographics who are less likely to vote and need more support and guidance (architecture, computer science, and mathematics majors). By analyzing how students vote and identifying demographics with low voting rates, Cornell Votes can target our efforts to improve 2020 results.

## Partners:

Cornell Votes coalitions and partnerships range from within our campus to across the nation. A list of the On-Campus Coalition and Off-Campus partners can be found on Page 11. In addition to our formal coalitions, Cornell Votes includes members of the Administration, Greek Life, Housing and Residential Life Office, and more through the Cornell Votes Advisory Committee whose full list can be found on Page 9. Upcoming partnerships include working with the Graduate Student Diversity Coalition, and Cornell Vice Presidents Ryan Lombardi and Joel Malina promoting our efforts.

## Resources:

Cornell Votes' financial resources primarily come from the Andrew Goodman Foundation as well as the Cornell Student Activities Funding Commission. Additional financial resources include the Ivy League Votes Challenge, and the Alliance for Youth Organizing.

# Landscape Continued

## Institutionalization:

Cornell Votes continues to collaborate with Cornell Campus Activities to promote our organization. Through this collaboration, the Cornell Votes website and contact information lives center-stage on the homepage of Campus Groups, the online hub for student activities. Additionally, we have partnered with Campus Activities to host a virtual Voting Fair on National Voter Registration Day. Cornell Votes has also partnered with freshmen orientation leaders to share voting information with all incoming students. Our presence in residential life continues to grow as well with voting information in dining halls and in dormitories. Finally, our organization has begun to have meetings with university leadership, including the Vice Presidents for University Relations and Student & Campus Life.

## Programming:

Frequently occurring events include workshops on registering to vote, absentee voting, and being ballot-ready. Cornell Votes has frequently been featured in prominent campus activities including Slope Day, Orientation Week, the Tatkon Center (a first year-oriented initiative), and the Public Service Center. Most recently, we have initiated programming with our On-Campus Coalition, graduate student body, and varsity student athletes.

## Achievements, Challenges, and Opportunities:

Cornell Votes underwent a massive restructuring over the summer, transforming into a self-governing student organization with a Constitution and Executive Board. Alongside two new Executive Board members, the organization also recruited and trained 30 general body members. Prior to becoming a student organization, the group also succeeded in providing transportation to all 9 polling places within Ithaca, growing our Instagram platform by over 200%, hosting workshops, and working with other campus groups to promote voter information. The Fall 2020 hybrid semester has posed a challenge to our group by limiting in person events, but has granted us the opportunity to grow our online platform.



## Timeline of Cornell Votes

### **Andrew Goodman Foundation Ambassador Team 2014-2020**

3 AGF Ambassadors



### **Cornell Votes Fellowship**

Jan 2020 - May 2020

13 Fellows and  
3 AGF Ambassadors



### **Cornell Votes Student Organization**

May 2020 - Present

6 Executive Board Officers  
30+ General Body Members  
1 AGF Ambassador

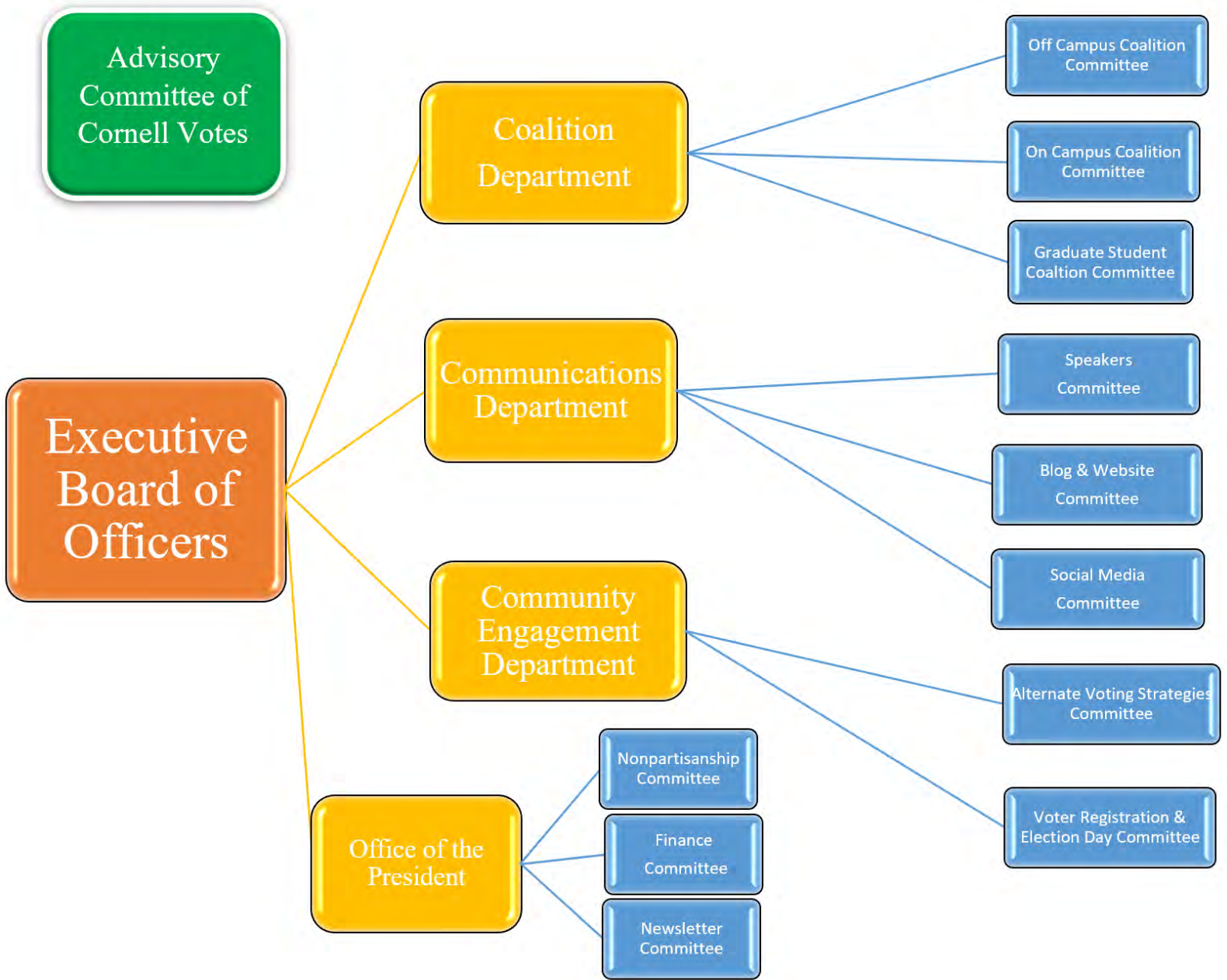
# History of Cornell Votes

Since establishing our first partnership with the Andrew Goodman Foundation in 2014, Cornell Votes has substantially increased its efforts in coordination with our increase in support. The reasoning for our expansions have varied, but each iteration served, and currently serves, to more strongly contribute to institutionalizing voter engagement at Cornell University and the Ithaca community.

Since 2014, a team of Andrew Goodman Foundation Ambassadors have acted as liaisons between AGF and Cornell University, their work evolving in coordination with both organizations. Currently, Patrick J. Mehler serves as Cornell University's sole Ambassador but Cornell Votes intends to include two more Ambassadors by 2021.

At the request of the University administration, the Public Service Center created and housed the Cornell Votes Fellowship, an initiative to create paid-positions for students involved in increasing civic engagement at Cornell. Due to COVID-19 and Cornell University's hiring freeze, the Fellowship was dissolved after five months, but their contributions laid the foundation for its final iteration.

In response to the dissolution of the Fellowship, five former fellows collaborated throughout the summer to create and formalize a university-sponsored student organization. The efforts of Tolani Aliyu, Tori Healey, Dana Karami, Patrick J. Mehler, and Grace Ogden led to a completed Constitution, Executive Board of Officers and General Body membership, all of whom now collaborate as Cornell Votes.



# Organizational Structure

Cornell Votes is split into three Departments: Coalition, Communications, and Community Engagement. Each Department hosts many committees within itself, each dedicated to achieving the core goals of the Department. Each Department has a Chair who serves on the Executive Board of Officers. The Office of the President hosts committees outside of any one Department, providing checks on the organization through the Nonpartisanship Committee and Finance Committee and hosting potential cross-department projects.

# DEPARTMENT SUMMARIES

"If people don't vote, everything stays the same. You can protest until the sky turns yellow or the moon turns blue, and it's not going to change anything if you don't vote."

**DOLORES HUERTA,**  
AMERICAN LABOR AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

## Coalition

The Coalition Department strives to create an inclusive environment in which Cornell Votes collaborates with organizations both on and off campus.

For the On-Campus Coalition, the Department aims to increase its coalition to 30 student organizations and host two meetings for the coalition to convene. Within the On-Campus Coalition, the Department will hold a friendly competition among organizations to encourage voter registration and turnout.

For the Off Campus Coalition, the Department seeks to solidify its current partnerships and strengthen our existing relationships. Cornell Votes will also be participating in the Ivy League Challenge to further civic engagement among the nation's most prestigious schools.

## Communications

The Communications Department aims to advertise voter information and Cornell Votes programming through creating a visible brand on social media.

The largest focus will be expanding our social media influence through the Social Media Committee. We aim to double our Instagram following through collaborating with partners to promote our posts and events. Additionally, we plan to increase engagement with our social media by hosting giveaways that reward students who register to vote.

Aside from a large Instagram push, we seek to strengthen our written and long-form communication methods through developing a more robust blog that draws on voting-related experiences of Cornell Votes members and coalition partners. Creating a well-organized and updated blog will be a major undertaking this semester.

## Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Department is Cornell Votes' hub for civic engagement advocacy and education. The Department goals include increasing voter registration, turnout, and overall civic awareness on campus.

This year, the Department will primarily focus on voter registration with a particular emphasis on early and absentee voting. The unique circumstances of the election this year have brought our Department's attention to alternate methods of voting. The Department hopes to gather information about all methods of voting and present that information through workshops, resource pages, and virtual tabling.

Much of Cornell Votes' GOTV efforts will be initiatives started in the Community Engagement Department. As the largest department within Cornell Votes, the Community Engagement Department is ready to increase turnout and help make our goals a reality.



# LEADERSHIP & University Wide Support

Cornell Votes' Executive Board of Officers, Advisors, and Advisory Committee are a collection of some of the most influential members in the Cornell community. Their collaboration allows Cornell Votes to continuously expand and reach tens of thousands of students, faculty, staff, and community members.



## EXECUTIVE BOARD OF OFFICERS

Coalition Dpt. Chair: **Grace Ogden**

Communications Dpt. Chair: **Komala Anupindi**

Community Engagement Dpt. Chair: **Shruti Kanna**

President: **Patrick J. Mehler**

Vice President of Finance: **Victoria Healey**

Vice President of Operations: **Dana Karami**

## ADVISORS TO CORNELL VOTES

**Amy Kuo Somchanhmvong**, Public Serve Center

Associate Director, Community-Based Learning and Partnership

**Sage Alia Clemenco**, Public Service Center

Community Initiatives Program Associate

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

**Jason Cole**, Associate Vice-President, University Relations

**Margherita Fabrizio**, Director, Carol Tatkon Center

**Eveline V. Ferretti**, Public Programs and Communication Administrator, Mann Library

**Gina Giambattista**, Director, Office of the Assemblies

**Jeff P. Godowski**, Assistant Dean, Flora Rose House, West Campus Housing System

**Patricia Gonzalez**, Assistant Director, Student Development Diversity Initiative

**Linda Mikula**, Strategic Communications

**Kara S. Miller**, Director, Greek Life

**Dr. Bruce Monger**, Senior Lecturer, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

**Julie Paige**, Director, Co-ops and Off-Campus Housing

**Krista Saleet**, Director, Public Service Center

**Ethan Stephenson**, Director, Faculty Living-Learning Program

**Kate Supron**, Campus-Community Liaison, Office of Community Relations

**Reginald White**, Director, Human Resources, Cornell Research Services

**Patricia Wynn**, Assistant Vice-President, Student and Campus Life

## UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

**Joel Malina**, Vice President for University Relations

**Dr. Ryan Lombardi**, Vice President for Student & Campus Life

# GOALS Overview

## Long Term 2020-2030

Institutionalizing student voting remains Cornell Votes' ultimate goal. In aiming to create a cultural shift in which democratic learning and civic participation are a part of each Cornellian's lives, Cornell Votes continues to expand our networks, provide resources, and facilitate voting at Cornell.

### Strategies for Institutionalization.

- Integrate voter registration into administrative processes that all new community member participate in:
  - Move-In Days
  - New Student To-Do List
  - Class Registration/Registrar
  - Hiring/Onboarding/Human Resources
- Advocate for Polling Locations on campus
- Coordinate campus-wide recognition of Election Days, including suspension of classes and paid-time off for staff



## Short Term

**2020-2021**

### General Goals:

- Increase voter registration and participation:
  - 90% Voter registration rate
  - 65% Voting rate of registered students
  - 51% voting rate

### Coalition Department:

- Increase On-Campus Coalition to 30+ student organizations
- Host 2 On-Campus Coalition meetings to train partners to run workshops
- Sponsor 10+ events hosted by different On-Campus Coalition organizations
- Regularly meet with the Upstate New York Coalition and Ivy League Votes Challenge to collaborate across campuses

### Communications Department

- Communicate Cornell Votes programming to the student body through social media
- Strengthen relationship with Coalition members by creating attractive graphics for other organizations to utilize
- Inform students of relevant election information such as dates and regulations
- Increase Instagram following by 100% through working with university partners

### Community Engagement Department

- Host 15+ workshops for voter registration, absentee ballot applications, and making voters become ballot-ready
- Educate Cornellians surrounding election deadlines, voter guidelines, and other key information
- Offer resources for individuals and organizations to learn how to register, how to be prepared, and how to vote

# STRATEGY Coalition



The Coalition Department of Cornell Votes focuses on building relationships and coalitions, both within and outside of the Cornell community. With these coalitions, the Coalition Department seeks to share resources, train members, build communities for collaboration, and serve as the contact to organizations for voting and civic engagement related questions and concerns. In doing this, we hope to empower coalition members with information, digital resources, and action plans related to voter registration, voter turnout, and civic engagement to bring to their broader network of contacts.

## On-Campus Coalition Committee

The On-Campus Coalition is composed of Cornell Votes' partners within the Cornell community. Currently, this coalition consists of between 15+ active student organizations, who attend coalition meetings twice a semester. Within this coalition, the Coalition Department provides resources, such as Instagram posts, Instagram stories, infographics, and organized information related to registering to vote, requesting and voting with an absentee ballot, and 2020 Census information. We encourage our members to share resources from the Communications Department on their organizations' social media pages and to their entire organization. Finally, we train our members on voter registration, election dates and deadlines, and absentee ballots so that they may serve as an expert on these issues to the members in their organizations.

Current Members include: Political Triumvirate (Cornell Political Union, Cornell Democrats, Cornell Republicans), Women's Health Initiative, Prison Reform Education Program (PREP), Women's Health Initiative (WHI), and more



## Off-Campus Coalition Committee

The Off-Campus Coalition focuses on strengthening Cornell Votes' relationships with external civic engagement centered organizations and coalitions to learn and collaborate on ways to better engage students. Within this committee, the Coalition Department manages relationships and attends meetings with all outside partners, continuing to add more organizations as our efforts expand.

Current Members include: ALL IN Democracy, Andrew Goodman Foundation, Common Cause, the Ivy League Votes Challenge, Every Vote Counts, League of Women's Voters Tompkins County, New York State Voter Coalition, Vote Early Day, Upstate New York Voter Engagement Coalition, and more



## Graduate Student Coalition Committee

The Graduate Student Coalition concentrates on Cornell's graduate student population. Currently, this coalition works with the Graduate & Professional Student Diversity Council (GPSA-DC). Similar to the On-Campus Coalition, this coalition works as a collaborative force with the GPSA-DC to share resources and tools so that the graduate student leaders of the GPSA-DC can bring necessary information to their peers on voting and election dates.

Current Members include: Graduate & Professional Student Diversity Council (GPSC-DC), LGBTQ+ Graduate Student Association (QGrads), & Black Graduate and Professional Student Association (BGPSA).



## Resources Needed:

The Coalition Department will need New York State voter registration ballots, absentee ballot request forms, stamps, envelopes, pens, and an FAQ sheet surrounding registering to vote, voting by absentee, and Election Day. These resources will be disseminated to our coalition members, so that they can help their organization's members with voting. The Coalition Department will also need volunteers and members to hold workshops and tabling events. These events will be crucial for coalition members to host and sponsor to reach the broader Cornell community.

# Coalition Fall 2020 Timeline

**Nov. 3!**

<p><b>Late August:</b> Political Triumvirate Training</p>	<p><b>Mid-September:</b> First On-Campus Coalition meeting</p>	<p><b>Early October:</b> Series of Voter Registration Workshops hosted by On-Campus Coalition partners</p>	<p><b>Late October:</b> Series of Absentee Ballot Workshops hosted by On-Campus Coalition partners and Political Triumvirate</p>
<p><b>Early September:</b> First Coalition Department meeting</p>	<p><b>Late September:</b> Series of Voter Registration Workshops hosted by Political Triumvirate</p>	<p><b>Mid-October:</b> Second On-Campus Coalition Meeting</p>	<p><b>Early November:</b> Series of Ballot-Ready &amp; Get Out the Vote Workshops hosted by Campus Coalition and Political Triumvirate</p>

# STRATEGY

## Communications

"Consciousness is power. Consciousness is education and knowledge. Consciousness is becoming aware. Tomorrow's world is yours to build."

**YURI KOCHIYAMA**  
AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Our goals of spreading voting information to students through programming and infographics are best achieved by employing several key methods of communication. While social media, particularly Instagram, remains our main method of communication, our three starting committees reflect the different communications strategies we will employ to facilitate the spread of information:

1. Speakers Committee: This committee consists of students who will organize events that involve community leaders. These leaders will speak about the importance of voting and civic engagement, as they will be people well-versed in advocacy and voting rights. By bringing these leaders to Cornell Votes events, we hope to garner more attention and attract more students.
2. Blog & Website Committee: Students will keep the website up-to-date to ensure prospective members, as well as the campus community at large, have accurate information on Cornell Votes' mission and programming. Similarly, this website will be supplemented by a frequently updated blog that draws upon members' ideas and experiences with the voting process.
3. Social Media Committee: The social media team will create attractive, branded graphics to publicize the Cornell Votes mission to the community. General body members will post relevant information, articles, and design posts that are aesthetically pleasing to provide students with an easier way to process and obtain information about voting and civic engagement.

### Resources Needed:

Much of the Communications Department's needs revolve around human resources. We need general body members to create a high quality, frequent stream of social media graphics. Similarly, members and volunteers are needed to write blog posts expressing their ideas and experiences. Another human resource the Department requires is well-connected members, who will make it possible to bring prominent speakers to Cornell Votes events. Finally, the Department will need physical and digital resources, which include stickers, banners, posters, printers, and the graphics website Canva.

## Communications Fall 2020 Timeline

**Nov. 3!**

Sept: 1st Department meeting	Mid-Sept: Have a fully updated website in preparation for Club Fest	October 9th: Begin absentee ballot social media push	Oct 24th: Publicize Early Voting period on social media
Mid-Sept: Instagram posts promoting National Voter Registration Day	Pre-September 22: Communicate with speakers coming to National Voter Registration Day	Late October: Begin ballot-ready social media push	

# STRATEGY

## Community Engagement

"Voting is the foundation stone for political action"

**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.**  
AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

The goals of the Community Engagement Department involve increasing our voter registration rate to 90%, registered turnout to 65%, and general turnout to 51%. We aspire to offer resources and avenues for the Cornell community to choose from a variety of voting methods, including voting on Election Day at polling sites, early voting, and absentee voting. This involves educating the Cornell community about election-related deadlines, voting guidelines and regulations, as well as other key voting information. The Department's goal of engaging the Cornell student body, administration, and the local city governance to aims to ensure that Cornell University and its extended community foster a positive environment to participate in their civic rights and responsibilities. The Community Engagement Department's strategies involve two internal committees to reach these goals:

1. Voter Registration Committee: This committee will focus its efforts on increasing voter registration among Cornell students. All members of the committee will be trained in voter registration methods and practices. In collaboration with the Coalition Department, the committee will run workshops to train Cornell student leaders on voter registration. The Voter Registration Committee will also run an educational campaign on social media to encourage students to register to vote, in collaboration with the Communications Department.
2. Alternate Voting Strategies (AVS) Committee: This committee is dedicated to supporting early voting, mail-in voting, and absentee voting efforts among the Cornell community. All members of the committee will be trained in the concepts and nuances of each alternate voting method and will run workshops to educate students about their voting options. The committee will also provide forms, applications, and one-on-one support for students to pursue alternative voting methods.

In early October, the Voter Registration Committee will begin its transition into the Election Day Committee. This committee will spearhead a Get Out The Vote campaign, educating students on how to vote at their polling sites. The committee will also work with on-campus residential life and student-run organizations to help students make a plan to vote. The transition from the Voter Registration Committee to the Election Day Committee will occur gradually as state voter registration deadlines pass in early and mid-October.

### Resources Needed:

In order to achieve its goals and the broader goals of Cornell Votes, the Community Engagement Department will require and utilize the following resources:

- Voter registration forms, absentee ballot request forms, stamps, and envelopes; copies of these forms and applications, including mailing supplies, are needed for students
- Volunteers will be needed to support workshops and Department campaigns to register students to vote, apply for absentee ballots, and get out the vote

## Community Engagement Fall 2020 Timeline

**Nov. 3!**

Sept: Host Voter Registration workshops

Early October: Host Absentee Ballot workshops

Mid-October: Host Ballot-Ready workshops

Sept 22: Virtual Voting Fair

Oct 24: Early Voting Day

# REPORTING & EVALUATION



The Campus Action Plan serves as a tool for Cornell Votes to continue to engage with its internal and external partners who directly support our efforts to institutionalize voting.

## **Internally, within Cornell University.**

The Campus Action Plan, the NSLVE reports, and periodic updates will be shared consistently with:

- Cornell University Student Body
- Cornell Campus Activities
- Cornell Student Assembly
- Cornell Votes On-Campus Coalition
- Public Service Center Personnel
- Upper University Leadership

## **Externally, outside of campus supporters.**

The Campus Action Plan, the NSLVE reports, and periodic updates will be shared consistently with the following external partners and supporters:

- Andrew Goodman Foundation
- ALL IN Democracy Challenge
- Dorothy Cotton Institute
- Ivy League Votes Challenge
- League of Women Voters, Tompkins County
- Rejoice the Vote
- Tompkins County Board of Election
- Upstate New York Vote Everywhere Coalition

## **Monitoring & Evaluation**

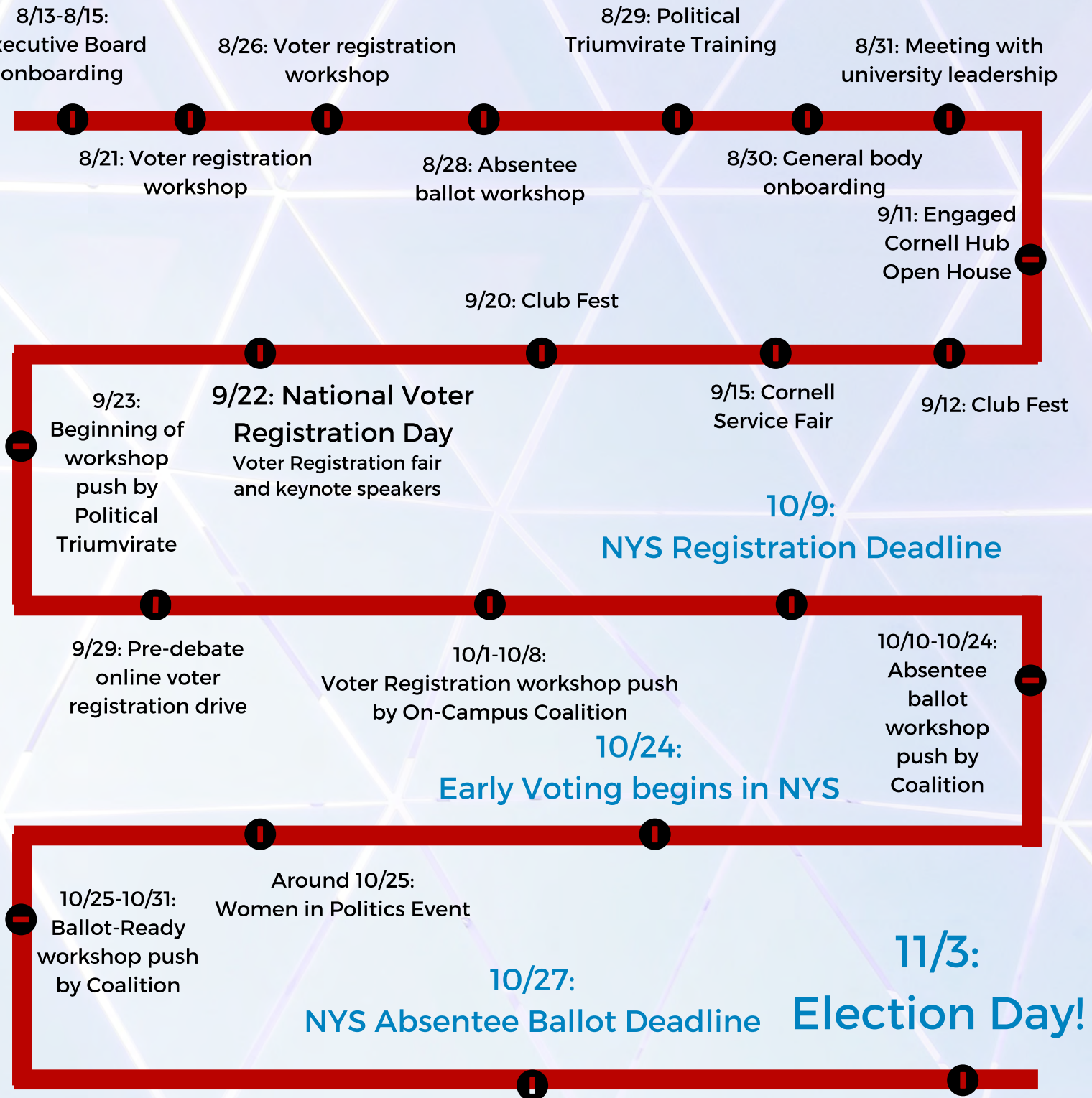
Cornell Votes is developing and utilizing data collection strategies to further engage our campus. These strategies include tracking:

- Event attendance and participation
- Programming hours
- Number of partners, internal and external
- Work hours from team members / volunteers
- Finances, with transparency surrounding revenue and expenditures
- Social media following and engagement



# TIMELINE

## Fall 2020



Post-Election Day will be dedicated to evaluating the semester and strategizing for Spring 2021.