

Executive Summary

The focus for Drexel’s action plan consists of three engagement pillars including voter registration, education, and communication. This work will be facilitated by an interdisciplinary group of students, faculty, and staff members, convened and chaired by the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement. The primary goal of this action plan is to utilize the university’s first-year civic engagement course as the vehicle for first-year student voter registration, and increase the number of students registered to vote and participating in each election. Each phase of the plan builds upon the activities of the first and focuses on engaging a wide audience at each step. Leading up to each primary and general election, Drexel University’s commitment to civic engagement will be enumerated internally and externally. In order to carry out this work, the working group will tap into Lindy Center partnerships, including the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP), the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE), and the Voter Friendly Campus cohort.

Leadership

The Lindy Center for Civic Engagement is the coordinating and driving force behind Drexel’s voter registration, education, and communication efforts. Dr. Jennifer Johnson Kebea, the executive director of the center, will oversee the broader strategy and serve as the chair of the working group, which will be comprised of staff, faculty, and students. Sandy Vogel, program coordinator for student civic engagement, will coordinate the working group, and is tasked with the logistics and groundwork for the action plan. The role of the working group is to convene stakeholders; first and foremost, students, as well as representatives from academic departments and administrative offices, to mobilize Drexel’s action plan and advance the three pillars of the strategy. Invitations to the working group are extended to departments, including the Office of Government and Community Relations, the Center for Public Policy, the Student Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and more broadly per the executive director’s discretion. These departments are tapped for their wealth of resources and centrality to this work. Student representation will stem from a partnership with the Campus Election Engagement Project’s

(CEEP) fellowship program. This program provides funding and guidance for five student fellows to execute non-partisan voter registration on their college campus prior to key elections. This cohort will provide the initial student representation to the working group. As the working group evolves, membership will be based on interest and capacity. This is especially important to consider for continuous student involvement.

Commitment

Drexel University is committed to civic learning and democratic engagement from the top down. At the beginning of President John Fry's tenure in 2010, he boldly declared that he wanted Drexel to become the most civically engaged university in the nation. The university is committed to civic engagement across three dimensions: academics and research, institutional investment, and public service. Drexel's voter engagement strategy is an institutional choice, which is demonstrated by the support for the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement, the hosting of a central polling location on campus, and the synergy of the Office of Government and Community Relations with local, state, and federal governments. The commitment to civic engagement will further be shared by a welcome message from President John Fry to the university at the beginning of fall term outlining Drexel's commitment to voter registration and education. This demonstrates internally to students, faculty, and staff that Drexel supports the right of citizens to participate in democracy. In addition, civic engagement work will continue to be highlighted to the general public as part of the university's robust admissions and publicity strategy.

Landscape

The current landscape of civic engagement is multi-faceted and the commitment extends across generations. Drexel identifies its commitment to civic engagement along three dimensions: academics and research, institutional investment, and public service. Opportunities for civic learning and democratic engagement exist within each dimension.

Academics and research includes key developments within community-based learning and community-engaged research, as well as clinical practice. Key highlights within academics and research include implementing and growing a university-wide framework for community-

based learning (CBL), offering numerous CBL courses in a variety of topics and formats, and providing CBL training for nearly 100 full-time faculty. Also in the academic space, the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement administers CIVC101: Introduction to Civic Engagement. This one-credit class is designed to introduce first-year students to key concepts in civic engagement and encourage students to consider their own civic pathways during their time at Drexel and beyond. This course enrolls over 3,000 students annually.

Institutional investments largely refer to how Drexel University serves as an anchor institution within the West Philadelphia community. The focus in regards to institutional investments includes aligning resources such as procurement, employment, and strategic business practices to fulfill our role as an anchor institution within the local economy. Accomplishments in this area include establishing and implementing local procurement policies, focusing on local hiring, and supporting West Philadelphian residents with the many programs and opportunities offered at the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships, the nation's first urban extension center opened in 2014.

Lastly, public service includes Drexel students, faculty, and staff members that are serving within the local, national, and global community through Drexel's various volunteerism programs. Most recently, the Lindy Center supported the launch and implementation of Drexel's Employee Volunteerism Program, now providing opportunities for faculty and staff to serve alongside student volunteers.

Drexel has also demonstrated a commitment to voter registration and engagement. Drexel's 2016 report from the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) indicates that Drexel University is comparable to the NSLVE cohort and research institutions. Out of an eligible student population of 20,162, over 16,000 individuals registered to vote. In 2016, out of the 16,000+ who registered to vote, over 11,000 students voted. This led to a voting rate of registered students of 70% and an overall voting rate of 55%. This is higher than the complete NSLVE cohort's overall voting rate of 50%. Drexel's overall voting rate is similar to other private and public research institutions.

To encourage voter registration and turnout, the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement and the Office of Government and Community Relations regularly send emails to the entire university community with information on registration deadlines and upcoming elections. There is one central polling place on campus for students who live on-campus, and there are a handful of local polling locations throughout Mantua and Powelton Village for students living in the nearby community to utilize.

Goals

In order to advance the landscape of civic learning and democratic engagement at Drexel, the institution is participating in the Voter Friendly Campus Designation program. The goals under this plan begin with CIVC101: Introduction to Civic Engagement. This one-credit class provides an excellent early opportunity to introduce students to their role as participatory citizens in the democratic process. The first-year civic engagement course is a pathway to ensure that students are registered to vote, are informed about candidates and upcoming elections, and are prepared overall to be part of an engaged electorate. In addition to maximizing the utility of the CIVC 101 course, Drexel will leverage the Voter Friendly Campus Designation to increase the voter engagement resources available to Drexel. This includes resources from the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP), local nonpartisan resources, and the wealth of knowledge available from the cohort of Voter Friendly campuses. Finally, Drexel aims to increase voter registration and voting rates by 5%+ in the 2020 NSLVE report in comparison to rates in the 2016 election. This increase would indicate that more Drexel students are registered to vote and exercising their civic duty by participating in elections.

Strategy

The strategy for Drexel's will follow a three-pronged approach: Voter registration, education, and communication. The components of each approach will encompass institutional and student-driven efforts. The primary audience for this work are Drexel students, including undergraduates and graduate students. The working group, coordinated by Sandy Vogel, program coordinator for student civic engagement, will help plan and facilitate the strategy.

Faculty and staff members will focus on institutional efforts while also providing guidance for the student-driven activities. Additional support for programming and staffing of events will be offered through Drexel's employee volunteerism program. The hope is that this work will reach Drexel's main campus in West Philadelphia, its Center City campus, and its larger community of students who are off-campus for co-op or study abroad.

The first phase of the strategy leading up to each primary and general election is registration. This will involve registering first-year students to vote during CIVC101, the first-year civic engagement course. This work will provide the opportunity for over 3,000 first year students to register to vote and learn about the process. This work will be carried out by volunteers from the working group and supported by the CIVC101 teaching assistants. Any individual carrying out voter registration will have an orientation on non-partisan voter registration guidelines, as well as FAQs and information pertaining to absentee ballots. In addition, information on voter registration will be made available on the Lindy Center's website and in university-wide email reminders aligning with national registration deadlines. The cohort of CEEP fellows will be tasked with holding voter registration events, and can determine when and where each event will take place. CEEP fellows will be supervised by the PA director of state operations for CEEP and Sandy Vogel. These supervisors will provide guidance to the fellows in order to further facilitate voter registration opportunities for students.

The second phase of the strategy will follow voter registration with voter education. This encourages registered voters to maintain a connection to the upcoming election and access non-partisan resources to inform their voting decisions. Voter education programming will include discussions on current events and Q&A sessions on voting and will be moderated by members of the working group or other interested faculty or staff members. Informational sessions will be hosted for student organizations to inform on best practices and resources for voter registration as well as rules and regulations for political engagement on campus. These events will also provide students with the opportunity to engage in civic dialogues with the Drexel community. CEEP fellows are also required to host voter education events, and these are student-driven programs that can have synergies with existing programming or be entirely new. In addition to

programming, non-partisan candidate guides, generated and fact-checked through CEEP, will be made available on the Lindy Center’s website and in-person at any events.

The final phase of the action plan will focus on communication. The focus on communication will be getting out the vote, a compliment to the first two phases of the strategy. Active and consistent communication with Drexel students will encourage students to vote and be a reminder leading up to each election day of where and when to vote. CEEP fellows will hold get out the vote events to communicate information to students and engage participants via social media. Further engagement will stem from the Lindy Center’s social media accounts. The working group and other interested volunteers will support the spread of get out the vote information through election day tabling at prominent points on campus. These get out the vote tables will be hubs for voting information and resources, and serve as a visual reminder for students to exercise their civic duty. Drexel University will also encourage students to vote via university-wide emails on election day.

Reporting

Drexel’s action plan for the Voter Friendly Campus designation program will be shared internally through the university staff and faculty mailing list, and will be including to the entire campus community in the introductory message from President Fry regarding Drexel’s commitment to voter engagement. An outline of the plan and a list of participants on the working group will also be available on the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement’s website. As outlined below in the Evaluation section, the data analyzed after each election will be included on the website to supplement the action plan itself. The outline of the action plan on the website and in written communications will highlight the university’s partners and resources in facilitating its strategy.

Evaluation

The evaluation of this strategy will connect quantitative and qualitative evidence in order to determine the success of the voter registration, education, and communication efforts. The Lindy Center for Civic Engagement will carry out the analysis with the support of the working group, and the group will convene for the purpose of evaluation after each primary election and

general election to review the data collected. After review by the working group, a summary of data will be made available on the Lindy Center’s website for public review.

Quantitative data will be collected and analyzed in the NSLVE report of each general election. This report covers analytics on the number of university students eligible to vote, how many registered, and how many voted in each general election. The report also compares Drexel’s outcomes to that of the entire NSLVE cohort of schools and similar research institutions. The quantitative data in the NSLVE report is important to determine if the strategy is achieving its goals in the appropriate timetable.

In terms of qualitative evidence, the CEEP fellows will be tasked with summarizing their programming, including details on the logistics and outcomes of each event. Fellows will be encouraged to collect data on number of attendees, feedback from participants and organizers, and detailed logistics on the planning of each event. This student-collected data will be used to complement the quantitative NSLVE data to create a holistic legacy document for each election. Special attention will be paid to documenting the 2020 presidential election to demonstrate the advances of Drexel’s strategy at the 2-year mark of inclusion in the Voter Friendly Campus cohort. Following the 2020 presidential election, a report will be published and distributed widely to further illustrate Drexel’s commitment to advancing civic learning and democratic engagement.