

# Voting Action Plan – Duke University

## May 31, 2022

### Executive Summary

Duke University has a long-standing commitment to increasing voter registration and turnout and providing opportunities for civic engagement for all students, faculty and staff. Proven systems and programs are in place to encourage active participation in democratic engagement activities both on campus and in the community. The purpose of this action plan is to outline goals and priorities for increasing voter registration, education and turnout among students, faculty and staff at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. This plan will be implemented for the 2022-2023 academic year and updated each election cycle to reflect best practices and outcomes. The Duke University Voting Cabinet and the Duke Votes student organization are responsible for overseeing the implementation of this action plan.

### Leadership

Duke University created a Voting Cabinet in 2020 consisting of membership from the offices of Government Relations, University Communications, Student Affairs, Event Services, Community Affairs, Human Resources, Undergraduate Education, faculty members and others. The Voting Cabinet guides decisions and plans to increase voter engagement on campus, working together with Duke Votes, on communications priorities and initiatives. The Voting Cabinet is representative of a wide array of departments across campus and is inclusive of a diverse group of stakeholders. In addition to our campus and health system partners, the Voting Cabinet collaborates with the local board of elections and many nonpartisan voter engagement groups (ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, NC Campus Compact, Vot-ER, You Can Vote, Campus Election Engagement Project, TurboVote).

#### Voting Cabinet Membership:

- Mike Schoenfeld, Vice President, Public Affairs and Government Relations
- Chris Simmons, Associate Vice President, Duke Government Relations
- Erin Kramer, Assistant Vice President, Media and Public Affairs
- Jonah Perrin, Duke Votes Student Chairman (student member)
- Blyth Morrell, Assistant Vice President, Digital and Brand Strategy
- Doug Heron, Associate Vice President, Duke State Relations
- Katie Lipe, Assistant Director, Duke State Relations
- Leslie Barnes, Associate Athletics Director
- John Blackshear, Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of Students
- Landy Elliott, Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education - Strategic Initiatives and Communications
- Jim Hodges, Director, Duke Event Services
- Leanora Minai, Executive Director of Communications, Office of Communication Services
- Sam Miglarese, Deputy Chief Administrator, Durham and Community Affairs
- Eric Mlyn, Faculty, Sanford School of Public Policy
- Adaobi Onunkwo, Director of External Advocacy, Duke Graduate and Professional Students (student member)

- Leslie Parkins, Assistant Vice President and Director for Civic Engagement
- Deondra Rose, Faculty, Sanford School of Public Policy and Director of POLIS: Center for Politics
- Katie McKittrick, Chief of Staff, Duke University Health System Human Resources

The Voting Cabinet will meet at least once a month leading up to the November 2022 election and the Voting Cabinet Communications Subcommittee will meet on a bi-weekly basis to create and plan voting communications initiatives.

## **Commitment**

2020 was the first year Duke University initiated a comprehensive communications plan and strategy for voter engagement. The coordinated effort between the Voting Cabinet and Duke Votes was well-received and successful in increasing voter turnout and encouraging democratic engagement on campus. The University community provided great feedback on the unified approach and it wouldn't have been possible without support from University leadership who made democratic engagement a top priority for all students, faculty and staff.

During the 2020 election season, President Vincent Price and various members of Duke's leadership team sent informational emails on several occasions to promote voter registration and participation. President Price also signed the ALL IN President's Commitment to Full Voter Participation, demonstrating Duke's commitment to prepare students to become responsible and engaged participants in our democracy and encouraging the right and duty to register and to vote. Duke's civic engagement efforts are also highlighted in the Duke Academic Strategic Plan in alignment with the university's overarching vision to "grow, connect, and empower diverse and inclusive communities of excellence to enhance the creation, delivery, and translation of knowledge for a rapidly changing world."

Students, faculty and staff are interested in democratic engagement efforts on campus and participate in a variety of different activities through Duke Votes and other organizations. Other examples that demonstrate Duke's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement include:

- Coordinated communications plan for voter registration and voting information (social media posts, mass communications to students, faculty and staff, frequent Duke Today news stories)
- Duke Votes website with voter registration and education resources for students, faculty and staff
- Multiple political clubs and student organizations with an interest in democratic and civic engagement
- Educational events, town halls, research projects and forums on candidates and democratic engagement
- On-campus early voting location
- Campus leaders promoting voting through communications (mass emails, video messages, social media posts)
- Student-led events:
  - o Voter registration tables on campus
  - o Text banking to remind students about voter registration deadlines and voting dates
  - o Seasonal events ("Voting Isn't Spooky" event on Halloween during the early voting period)
  - o Registering students to vote at the bus stop
  - o Couch parties – competitions between other universities to register students to vote

- “Dorm Storm” events – posting voting information cards on dorm room doors
- Painted a bridge on campus with a Duke Votes graphic and voting information
- Created a pledge for student groups to commit to 100% of members registering to vote and voting
- Coordinated apartment voting ambassadors to disseminate voting information to students living off-campus
- Frequent emails and social media posts to Duke Votes subscribers
- Trained students to assist with voter registration efforts
- Duke Athletics teams had 100% voter registration and turnout in 2020 and posted pictures on social media
- Signage promoting voter registration and election dates (digital signage in buses and in buildings, decals on walls, voting information postcards at COVID vaccination sites)
- Transportation provided to the polls (Lyft, electric scooters, van shuttles)
- Created a video for professors to show their students with details on registering to vote and voting information
- Staff voter registration events
- Class presentations on registration and voting
- Badge-backers with voter registration QR codes for clinical staff

## **Landscape**

The following table provides a brief overview of the demographics of Duke’s student population. This information is based on data collected from Fall 2021.

<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Graduate</b>	<b>Undergrad - NC Residents</b>	<b>Undergrad - Men</b>	<b>Undergrad - Women</b>
6,789	9,991	18%	45%	55%

<b>African-American</b>	<b>Asian-American</b>	<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	<b>Caucasian</b>	<b>Nonresident Alien</b>	<b>Two or More Ethnicities</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
8%	21%	11%	40%	9%	6%	5%

Duke University offers a robust learning experience for students, providing programs and services that support the optimal growth of Duke students, enhance their intellectual, social, cultural and physical development, and complement Duke’s academic excellence by providing opportunities for students to experience education and explore interests beyond the classroom. Duke University is home to 400+ recognized student organizations that foster student interaction and exchange, exploration of a variety of interest areas, understanding of the principles of organizational structure and management, and development of valuable collaboration, leadership, and communication skills. Duke also supports many centers and organizations on campus involved with democratic and civic engagement activities and

research, such as Duke Votes, Polis: Center for Politics, Hart Leadership Program, Bass Connections and the Office of Civic Engagement, among others.

## **Goals**

The Voting Cabinet at Duke University hopes to achieve several short-term and long-term goals in the future, with a focus on increased voter registration and voter turnout levels among students, faculty and staff.

### **Short-Term Goals (2022)**

- Increase midterm election registration rate by 15 percentage points in 2022 (60.9% in 2018).
- Increase midterm election voter turnout rate by 35 percentage points in 2022 (39.3% in 2018).
- Integrate voter registration as part of the first-year orientation process.
- Implement student survey on voting activities.
- Implement Voting Cabinet post-election survey.

### **Long-Term Goals (2022 and Beyond)**

- Ensure that every student is touched by a voter registration effort.
- Increase voter registration rate by 10 percentage points (79% in 2020).
- Increase voter turnout rate by 25 percentage points (70.9% in 2020).
- Integrate voter registration in the course registration process.
- Add representation to the Voting Cabinet from more diverse groups on campus (additional faculty, representation from marginalized/minority student organizations).
- Incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement learning objectives into the general education curriculum.

## **Strategy**

Below is a strategy for how these goals will be brought to life in the coming months and years.

- Train Resident Advisors and Faculty in Residence on the voter registration process. Provide each representative with voter registration materials and resources.
- Set up voter registration tables at dorm check-in locations for first-year students during the orientation process.
- Plan a comprehensive communications strategy and timeline to disseminate voting information to the Duke community (themes for each week leading up to the election, social media posts, news stories, signage, etc).
- Hold weekly voter registration events and tabling in advance of the voter registration deadline.
- In addition to voter registration efforts for students, coordinate voter registration events for faculty and staff. Focus on reaching staff during shift changes and in commonly visited areas on campus.
- Plan voter registration events at student and employee flu clinic sites, staff appreciation football games, etc.
- Support the continuation of student-led Duke Votes events and initiatives (referenced above).
- Convene the Voting Cabinet and the Communications Subcommittee on a regular basis.

- Provide voter registration resources for professors to share with students.
- Involve leaders on campus (emails from President Price and senior leadership, photos of leaders voting).
- Engage with the Registrar's office to incorporate voter registration as part of the course registration process.

## **National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) Data**

Duke University received access to the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data for 2020. In 2020, Duke's registration rate was 79%. In comparison to the data from 2016, this rate increased by 10.8%. Duke's voting rate was 70.2% in 2020, showing a 14.5% increase from 2016. The voting rate among registered students in 2020 was 88.8%, up from 81.6% in 2016. During the 2020 election year, Duke's voting rate was higher than the national average 66%. Many students chose to vote by absentee ballot or during the early voting period, with only 356 students voting in-person on Election Day. 65% of undergraduate students and 52% of graduate students voted in the 2020 election. The Voting Cabinet will utilize these trends, metrics and information to tailor our voting communications and events accordingly.

## **Reporting and Evaluation**

Duke University's voting action plan will be posted on the public Duke Votes website once finalized, along with the most updated NSLVE data. The action plan will be reviewed throughout the election season to ensure the Voting Cabinet's actions are consistent with the goals and priorities outlined in the plan. After the election, the Voting Cabinet will revisit the goals outlined in the plan to identify what was achieved or not achieved, and will use this information to adjust short-term and long-term goals accordingly. The Voting Cabinet will catalogue all communications initiatives, communications metrics (news stories, social media engagement, email messages from leadership, etc.), participation in voter registration events and educational programming, and general feedback to measure progress and evaluate the success of various initiatives. NSLVE data will also be evaluated each election cycle to measure voter participation rates among students.