



AND MEMBERS OF THE
STUDENT GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION

PREPARED BY:
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SGA PRESIDENT



2020
2021



VOTING ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

PLAN TO INCREASE STUDENT VOTER
ENGAGEMENT AT EL PASO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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BE HUMAN. BE ENGAGED.

Signing up for the All-In Challenge is more than just committing to a cause; it is about becoming something bigger to change our community and immediate surroundings. Two years ago, I joined the Student Government Association as an opportunity for self-improvement. Before joining, my confidence was at an all-time low, the mental state was in a dark place, but over the course of these years, it gave me the self-confidence to become something bigger than just student government. It gave me the confidence to be involved and help change my immediate surroundings for the better. The next generation of El Pasoans has the opportunity to improve our immediate surroundings with enough effort. Engaging our friends, family, and community to vote is the start and the key to doing that.

El Paso Community College was established in 1969 and has become the hub to become something more for any resident in the city/county. Many students (including myself) are first-generation college students, where our parents immigrate from Mexico to give us a better opportunity at life and prosperity. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, 21% of immigrants that come to El Paso have completed high school, and 1/3rd of the city's foreign-born population is naturalized. Many residents use El Paso Community College as its start to obtain a higher education, or in my case, as a second chance at higher education. It is proven that the higher the poverty, the less voter turnout. In the 2014 midterm election, El Paso County had a 19.87% voter turnout. A story I like to express to my peers is the El Paso Community College's Board of Trustees election, where one trustee won by eight votes in their district. There are over 36,386 students in the college, and any voter can sway the elections, altering our community's course.

We want to empower our students as they are the future generation, with the power to vote; it allows us to sit at the table. Like my predecessor said once before, "If we don't have a seat in the table, we are on the menu."

Time to empower our community, and we're all in.

ALEX RODRIGUEZ

President
Student Government Association

TO SUMMARIZE THINGS

Our commitment to the All In Challenge is to increase voter engagement in our student body and increase participation in our community. Being a border city, El Paso has over 80% of its population is Hispanic or Latino. Being a bastion of new beginnings from our neighbors from the south, El Paso is, unfortunately, the largest principal city in Texas, with the most substantial poverty level of 20.3%. El Paso also has one of the lowest voter turnouts where the 2014 midterm election only brought out 19.87% of its population to go out and vote.

Our goal for increasing political engagement at El Paso Community College is to raise awareness, educate and empower our immediate community by enacting positive change throughout the physical and online reach. We want to show why it is essential for exercising your duty as a United States citizen, but most of all, in our city. The majority of our student body is uninterested in using their right to vote because of the lack of education on what a vote can do. Informing the student body about why it is essential to vote by not just saying, "it is important," but explain and relate with personal stories on why it is crucial. While election years have the most massive voter turnout, we want to help students empower themselves to raise their voices and contribute to the public discourse beyond presidential elections. We want to inspire them to shape their communities beyond just a vote. Once we get a student to go out and vote, it opens up more opportunities for them to be involved in other things surrounding their lives. Community college students have unique insights, a majority of us come from disadvantaged communities, and we are the driving force in El Paso. A majority of students that graduate from the University of Texas at El Paso tend to leave the city for better job opportunities, and graduates from EPCC are the ones that stay, thus left making the decisions in our city.

TO SUMMARIZE THINGS

The Student Government Association at El Paso Community College cultivates a sense of civic agency among students, including the knowledge, skills, and motivation to become co-creators in the kind of community in which they live. High voting rates will be a byproduct of this kind of culture, as students are invited to awaken to the reality that they are the ones they have been waiting for to make their world a better place.

Because community colleges across the United States serve some of the most disadvantaged and underrepresented populations in the United States, awakening our students to their civic potential makes a fair, just, and equitable representative democracy possible. This action plan aims to create a culture that empowers students to engage their heads, hands, and heart in the 2020 election and get involved in their respective communities beyond just voting.



OUR DEMOGRAPHICS

El Paso Community College is in El Paso, Texas. It is the largest borderland metroplex in the United States. The city's ethnic majority is the minority. Over 80 percent of the population in El Paso is Hispanic or Latino. This statistic is well represented in voting numbers as well. Other than the historical midterm election of El Paso native Beto O'Rourke, which brought 46% of the population of El Paso to vote.

There has been a less than 30% voter turnout in every midterm election since 1998. El Paso Community College students enrolled in the 2018 - 2019 school year include 36,386 students across El Paso county. Majority who are enrolled in college for the first time; 82% of students being Hispanic. 5,858 (15%) of which being dual credit enrolled students.



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of students at El Paso
Community College are
Hispanic.

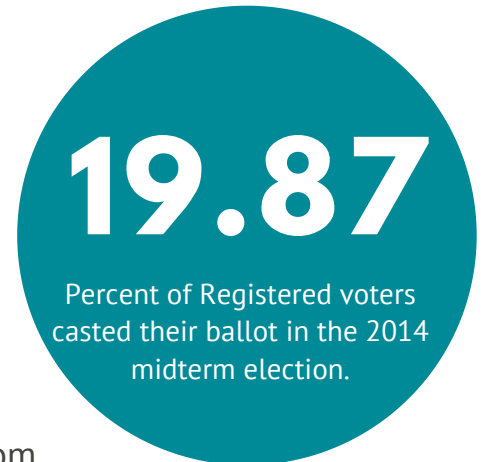
Concerning age, 48 percent of students are 19 years of age or under; about 29 percent are 20-24; about 11 percent are 25-29, and 12 percent are 30 or over. Regarding gender, 60 percent of the student body is female; 40 percent male. El Paso Community College has no on-campus housing, making it a strictly commuter campus, which poses unique challenges to engagement.

There is an apartment complex near the main campus treated as the "dorms," but a minimal number of students reside there. Challenges that El Paso experiences include the high poverty rates and a "brain drain" problem, where any educated citizens end up migrating to a different city for better jobs. A small minority of EPCC students are from Hudspeth county, and Dona Ana County in New Mexico. Despite these challenges, El Paso Community College has become one of America's leading community colleges, with the Aspen Institute granting the college the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, an award given to just 150 colleges in the country. The Student Government Association has highly active civic members in the community, being in part of Texas Rising, a group involved in turning people out to vote, United States Census complete count committee, and other organizations. Since that time, the organization has seen several students earn state recognitions and awards for their civic engagement, such as getting recognized by the Texas Legislature via resolution in their previous assembly.

LEADERSHIP

We decided to have a working group composed of community members that will help us spread the word on what we are doing and gather useful information. Our Student Government already works with the Student Leadership and Campus Life office from the school.

The collaboration with these offices has helped us over time by having events on campus. For example, this academic year, we had a series of events called Teal Grill and Chill, where we had students participating in the school's democratic process while having lunch with us. In this event, Campus Life staff participated by inviting students to come and chill with us. Another group that has helped us is the history and government department, and faculty members. It facilitated our classrooms to talk about how democracy impacts our city and registering people to vote.



CENTER FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The El Paso Community College's Center for Students with Disabilities provides an equal opportunity to complete students' educational goals through accommodations based upon a person's disability. The various clubs and associations of EPCC collaborate with the Center for Students with Disabilities to provide equal resources for everyone. This partnership helps to reach our goal by increasing the awareness of democracy by spreading information among the students enrolled in the program.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

The Veterans Affairs Office at EPCC strives to serve students the most effective and efficient way possible. El Paso Community College has over 3,000 service members, veterans, and families. With this collaboration, we can increase the awareness of democracy in a more effective way for veterans and their families.



The Kharisma James Veterans Resource Center - Dedicated to Late SGA member and key contributor of founding the Veterans Resource Center in El Paso Community College

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE CENTER

The First-Year Experience program at El Paso Community College provides a safety net for students to transition to college through an integrated system of communication, support, and intervention to establish a solid foundation through the student's college experience. This program introduces first-year students to useful resources as tutoring. To increase democracy, we need to make sure that we reach as many students as possible. This partnership opens the door to introduce first-year students to gather information about our democratic process.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONAL COUNCIL (SOC)

The Student Organizational Council is the lead of the student clubs, and it is part of the Student Government Association. The Student Organizational Council helps us to spread the word of what events are going on in the school and how clubs can participate. The SOC is a crucial part of the civic engagement at our college since it requires students to participate in Campus Life activities. By having the SOC as a working group, we can have members contribute to the project.

ADMINISTRATION

We are collaborating with the Director of Student Leadership and Campus Life, Vice President of Student Services, and Executive Director of Admissions and Registrar to get students registered to vote.



Board members in the grand opening of the first year experience center in 2019.

COLLEGE LANDSCAPE

El Paso Community College focuses on preparing students for the workforce while finishing their Associate's Degree. The school teaches students to be democratically and civically engaged by requiring students to take two United States history classes, and a political science course for graduation. These courses introduce democracy and civics, and they are a prerequisite for graduation. The college also offers ethics courses to further the students' knowledge and introduction to civics. El Paso Community College offers various programs for students to engage in civic participation.

As introduced in the Section of Collegiate Groups of this document, the Student Organizational Council is the root of civic engagement at EPCC. This organization is made up of student clubs that are eager to help the community. The Office of Student Leadership and Campus Life at the college offers students opportunities to develop their leadership skills (the office provides a student leadership course and a weekend conference that any EPCC student can attend) while helping the college increase student engagement. The office also encourages students to improve their civic participation and develop a sense of civic responsibility. Different clubs, organizations, and programs at EPCC help increase civic engagement by having events that encourage students to be more democratically involved.

For example, the Pasos Program, Student Government Association, and faculty members encourage people to vote. The Tejano Ambassador Program, Student Government Association, and Campus Life have organized various diversity and inclusion events where students are encouraged to be more civically aware. In these events, students can register to vote and express their opinion on how we can improve the student experience on campus or what they think is missing.

OUR COMMITMENT

Our commitment to increasing voter registration and turnout to the polls is as follows.

Have students register at new student orientations:

Register freshman students to vote during new student orientation.

Have all eligible SGA members deputized:

Deputize eligible SGA members to register students to vote.

Have club members from the Student Organizational Council registered:

To encourage club members to vote and allow us go into their club meetings to register students.

Establish a permanent committee within SGA for voter registration:

When transitioning to new student bodies, we will encourage our future SGA members to keep going in our efforts to get prospective students registered to vote.

Coordinate with the county elections commission to have polling locations on campuses for elections:

Out of the five-campus locations in El Paso, there is only one early voting and one election day polling location. Make available additional campus locations for our student body to vote.

Host town halls:

Host events for our student body involving our yearly commitment regarding issues we are advocating for, to include voting. Also register students to vote in college sponsored events we are invited to.

Participate in All In Campus Challenge Coordinator Events:

Participating in Early Voter Day and webinars to further add to this list to increase voter registration is beneficial to our student body to go out and vote!

Educating people focusing on civic engagement and the importance of voting:

Presenting in classrooms about the importance of voting rather than instructors, so students can relate more and be committed to our cause.

OUR COMMITMENT (CONT.)

Our commitment to increasing voter registration and turnout to the polls is as follows.

Propose a resolution with Texas community colleges within our region and state to commit to getting their student body registered to vote:

Annually, over 50+ community colleges throughout the state of Texas meet for the Texas Junior College Student Government Association Conference. Students can deliberate and propose resolutions that would provide more awareness and commit to proposed resolutions brought to the conference and assembly.

Registering students in classrooms to vote:

Requesting professors regardless of subject on our campus to register students to vote while being deputized by the state will give students more convenient access.

Community College Day:

Every odd year has Texas lawmakers meet in Austin for their bi-annual legislature. In collaboration with the Texas Junior College Student Government Association, Lobbying and advocating for better voting resources and methods allows us to expand our influence more than just our college campus.

Propose statewide resolutions for the "opt-out" voting system in Texas:

If adopted, this resolution would mobilize community college students throughout the state to advocate to their representatives. The goal is for Texas to automatically register people to vote when they renew or obtain their license for the first time.

Individuals could choose to "opt-out" by returning the notification. The resolution will model after Oregon, the first state to implement Automatic Voter Registration(AVR).

Constitution Day:

Although mandated by the state to have a constitution day event. We are collaborating with student leadership and campus life to host the event, provide information on how to get registered, and get students registered to vote!

National Voter Registration Day:

Texas requires individuals to be registered to vote 30 days before the election. Making this day a big push to register voters in collaboration with the local elections office will help our cause.

OUR COMMITMENT (CONT.)

Our commitment to increasing voter registration and turnout to the polls is as follows.

Faculty Collaboration:

Having multiple faculty members heavily involved within our community. Reaching out to them to collaborate with them in numerous events will be extremely beneficial to the cause.

Creating a Club for Voter Registration and Education: Establish a club to empower and mobilize young people throughout our community. This club will educate people in a non-partisan way to cast their ballot.

REPORTING AND EVALUATION

This assessment will be determined through the outcome of each active academic year by the current Student Government Association members, and director of Student Leadership and Campus Life. Keeping track on voter registration and voter turnout by cross referencing after the election period. This will help us paint a clearer picture of the impact of our efforts to get everyone registered and turn out to vote. This information will also help us give reference to the next student body that could take on the responsibility to register students to vote

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our plan's purpose is to encourage students to register, inform, vote, and giving them a purpose to be engaged in the democratic process. We have heard before often from students saying that "My vote doesn't matter," but in actuality, it does. Both the Millennials and Generation Z hold an extensive amount of power in the electoral vote. People ages 18-29 make up 1 third of the electorate. As a multicultural College, many of our students face barriers to register, or cast their vote. This challenge gives us more of a determination to encourage those students who are eligible to vote and help them understand the impact they can make.

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