Elon University 2020 Political Engagement Plan

Executive Summary
The purpose of this document is to provide a plan for Elon University to successfully prepare for and implement election engagement activities during Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters with a focus on the 2020 general election. The plan outlines a series of nonpartisan initiatives to be implemented across Elon's campus. The primary goal of the plan is to provide students with the necessary resources to register to vote and cast their ballots in the 2020 election. The broader framework behind this goal is to cultivate the next generation of informed leaders who will help strengthen communities and shape our democracy.

This plan was developed by the co-chairs of the Elon University Political Engagement Work Group – a collaborative team that involves students, faculty, and staff that falls under the university's Council on Civic Engagement. Members represent areas from across campus, including, but not limited to, the Department of Political Science and Policy Studies, Global Education Center, Center for Leadership, Student Government Association, Residence Life, School of Communications, and the Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement. Members of this group will be responsible for the implementation and execution of the plan.

Leadership

Name	Title	Office/Organization	Category
Carrie Eaves (Co-chair)	Assistant Professor	Political Science and Policy Studies	Faculty
Bob Frigo (Co-chair)	Associate Director	Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement	Staff
Mark Dalhouse	Director, Global Experiential Initiatives	Global Education Center	Staff/Faculty
Colin Donohue	Director, School of Communications Student Engagement and Alumni Affairs	Student Media and School of Communications	Staff/Faculty
Sophie Gerth	Director, Civic Engagement	Elon Volunteers!	Student
Lauren Pelzner	Coordinator, Deliberative Dialogues	Elon Volunteers!	Student
Dana Pursley	Associate Director	Center for Leadership	Staff
Andrea Sheetz	Coordinator/ Ambassador	Elon Votes!/ Andrew Goodman Foundation	Student
Louisa Scholar	Executive Vice President	Student Government Association	Student
Ellie Snyder	Coordinator/ Ambassador	Elon Votes!/ Andrew Goodman Foundation	Student
Trianne Smith	Community Director	Residence Life	Staff
Sylvia Wade	Community Director	Residence Life	Staff

Commitment
Elon University defines civic engagement as the process of learning about the assets, needs, and concerns of the larger communities of which we are a part and the willingness to collaborate with others to help define and achieve the common good. This theme is central to the Elon University mission of preparing civically engaged graduates who are "global citizens and informed leaders motivated by a concern for the common good." As a university, we emphasize our responsibility to live in community, acknowledging our interdependency with others.

Elon students, faculty, staff and alumni join in an intentional and progressive educational process to create a culture that:
- Assists members in recognizing their responsibility, as part of the larger community, to actively address social conditions through mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships with community partners.
- Offers opportunities and programs that deepen students' awareness and understanding of social and political issues and challenges students to develop a framework for responsible citizenship.
- Provides increasingly complex learning experiences that enhance the development of the skills needed to be effective citizens, including communication, collaboration, critical analysis, problem solving and leadership.
- Celebrates and rewards the accomplishments of students, faculty, staff, alumni and community partners who demonstrate good citizenship, live lives of civic engagement and support the civic life and programs of the university.

The Council on Civic Engagement meets monthly to discuss institution-wide goals to advance the university's commitment to civic and political engagement. This Council is comprised of faculty, staff, and student representatives and co-chaired by the Faculty Fellow for Civic Engagement and the Director of the Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement.

Landscape
The work group has used our campus 2012/2016 and 2014/2018 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reports to determine areas of success and identify areas to address.

Year	Election Type	Voter Registration Rate	Voting Rate
2012	General	74.1%	42.5%
2016	General	77.4%	43.9%

Year	Election Type	Voter Registration Rate	Voting Rate
2014	Midterm	66.2%	10.7%
2018	Midterm	75.9%	29.4%

An analysis of this data indicates that while our institution has a relatively respectable voter registration rate, our voting rate is a challenge. The Political Engagement Work Group has determined that one of the major contributing factor to our lower voter turnout rate is the fact that approximately 80% of our student body comes from out of state. While Elon University falls below national averages in the areas of voter registration and voting rates, our recent 2018 midterm data is on par with another private institution in North Carolina with similar out of state student rates. Despite using TurboVote to help our students navigate deadlines, voter registration forms, and absentee ballot forms for all 50 states, there is still much work to be done. This NSLVE data has informed our campus strategies in the form of creating a programmatic focus in election years to

specifically targeting voter registration in the month of September and absentee ballots in the month of October. In addition, we have leveraged this data to propose that our TurboVote link be incorporated into OnTrack – an internal university platform that allows student to schedule classes, and access grades and financial aid information.

Goals
The following overarching goals have been established for the Elon Votes! initiative:
1. Provide students with the necessary resources to register to vote and cast their ballots in upcoming elections
2. Cultivate the next generation of informed leaders who will help strengthen communities and shape our democracy

The following goals have been identified for 2020:
1. Increase the student voting rate from 43.9% to 50%
2. Launch the new student voting ambassador pilot program
3. Expand the focus on absentee ballots

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)
Refer to the Landscape section above for an overview of Elon's NSLVE data and how the Political Engagement Work Group has been using that data to drive programmatic decisions and make proposals to the institution's administration.

Strategy
The following 2020 strategy has been developed and endorsed by Elon Votes! and the Political Engagement Work Group:

<u>Spring 2020</u>
I.   State of the Union Watch Event (January)

II.   NC Voter ID Publicity Campaign (February – Date TBD)
   - Launch publicity campaign to advertise new Elon student voter ID given the new voter identification requirement that begins in 2020

III.   Pizza and Politics Iowa Discussion/Ambassador Gathering (Thursday, Feb 13 7:30-8:30pm)

IV.   Super Tuesday Tabling and Watch Event/Ambassador Gathering (Tuesday, March 3, 8:00pm)

V.   Democratic Presidential Candidate Watch Events/Ambassador Gatherings (February, March, April – Dates TBD)

<u>Fall 2020</u>
I.   Weekly Voter Registration Events (September)
   - National Voter Registration Week (September 21-25)

II.   Weekly AbsenTea Events (October)

III.   Presidential Debate Watch Events
   - Tuesday, September 29: First Presidential Debate
   - Wednesday, October 7: Vice Presidential Debate

- Thursday, October 15: Second Presidential Debate
- Thursday, October 22: Third Presidential Debate

IV. Election Day (Tuesday, November 3)
- Shuttle to Two Local Polling Places
- College Coffee
- Election Night Watch Event
- Phoenix Walk to the Polls with President Book

Reporting

In Spring 2020, the Political Engagement Work Group will discuss whether or not it recommends that the 2020 action plan and previous campus NSLVE data should be made public on the Elon Votes! website. While the campus NSLVE reports have been shared with students, faculty, and staff through venues such as presentations and interviews with the student newspaper, they have not been posted on campus websites to date.

Evaluation

The 2020 action plan is the first that Elon University has created given that it joined the ALL IN Challenge in 2019. The progress of the 2020 plan will be evaluated by the Political Engagement Work Group following the completion of the calendar year in Spring 2021 to determine its effectiveness. The group will also analyze the 2020 NSLVE data during that same time period. This combined analysis and evaluation will then be used to draft the action plan for the 2022 midterm election year in Fall 2021.