



Elon University 2020 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this document is to provide a plan for Elon University to successfully prepare for and implement election engagement activities during the Fall 2020 semester 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.

COALITION

The Elon University Political Engagement Work Group is a nonpartisan collaborative team that involves students, faculty, and staff who are charged to cultivate the next generation of informed leaders who will help strengthen communities and shape our democracy. 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.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Office/Organization</i>	<i>Category</i>
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	Student Representative	Elon Volunteers!	Student
Trevor Molin	Coordinator/ Ambassador	Elon Votes!/ 	Student

		Andrew Goodman Foundation	
Lauren Pelzner	Coordinator, Deliberative Dialogues	Elon Volunteers!	Student
Cate Podell	Director, Civic Engagement	Elon Volunteers!	Student
Andrea Sheetz	Coordinator/ Ambassador	Elon Votes!/ Andrew Goodman Foundation	Student
Trianne Smith	Community Director	Residence Life	Staff
Jonathan Stettler	Executive Vice President	Student Government Association	Student
Sylvia Wade	Community Director	Residence Life	Staff
Vacant		Center for Leadership	Staff

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

Elon University has a demonstrated commitment to civic engagement. The institution served as one of the model campuses for the first cohort recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning as a community engaged institution in 2006. The university was recertified with this designation in 2015 and is preparing for renewal in 2025. Elon recently launched *Boldly Elon*, its strategic plan for 2030. The plan includes a charge to advance a national civic engagement model that prepares all students to engage in local communities. This charge involves preparing every student to participate in community and civic engagement, gaining community engagement skills and an understanding of their civic responsibilities.

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Council on Civic Engagement

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.

Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement

Elon Votes!

Launched in 2014, *Elon Votes!* is a nonpartisan campus initiative created to provide students with the necessary resources to register to vote and cast their ballots in upcoming elections. This initiative is housed in the Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement and is managed by student *Elon Votes!* Coordinators and Andrew Goodman Foundation Ambassadors Andrea Sheetz and Trevor Molin.

Active Citizen Series

The Active Citizen Series is designed to cultivate the next generation of informed leaders who will help strengthen communities and shape our democracy. This initiative allows students to gain a deeper understanding of how government works and to develop the necessary skills to engage in civil discourse across political divides.

GOALS

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

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 factors 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.

STRATEGY

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

Fall 2020 Calendar: September (Voter Registration Focus)

Voter Registration Events

- A. College Coffees
September 1, 8, 15, 22 (National Voter Registration Day), 29
- B. Weekly Moseley Center Tables
September 1, 8, 15, 22 (National Voter Registration Day), 29

Debate Watch Events

- A. Tuesday, September 29: First Presidential Debate
(Co-Sponsors: Center for Leadership, Commission on Presidential Debates)

Fall 2020 Calendar: October (Absentee Ballot Focus)

Absentee Ballot Events

- A. College Coffees
October 6, 13, 20, 27
- B. AbsenTEAs
October 6: Irazu (Co-Sponsor: SGA)
October 13: Argo (Co-Sponsor: SGA)
October 20: Moseley Center Table (Co-Sponsor: SGA)
October 27: Moseley Center Table (Co-Sponsor: SGA)

Debate Watch Events

- A. Wednesday, October 7: Vice Presidential Debate
Note: Night before Fall Break, just put on Moseley Center tv if open
- B. Thursday, October 15: Second Presidential Debate
(Co-Sponsors: Residence Life, Commission on Presidential Debates)
- C. Thursday, October 22: Third Presidential Debate
(Co-Sponsors: School of Communications, Commission on Presidential Debates)

Fall 2020 Calendar: November (Election Focus)

Election Day Events

- A. Phoenix Walk to the Polls with President Book
- B. Shuttles to Polling Places (7:00am-7:00pm)
- C. College Coffee
- D. Election Night Watch Event
(Co-Sponsors: SGA, Council on Civic Engagement)

Post-Election Events

- A. Department of Political Science and Policy Studies Post-Election Event
Thursday, November 5

EVALUATION

While election engagement work has been taking place at Elon University since 2014, this is the first Voter Friendly Campus Designation Campus Plan submitted by our institution. The progress of this 2020 plan will be evaluated by the Political Engagement Work Group in Spring 2021 to determine the progress made on the following goals identified for this year:

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

This analysis and evaluation will then be used to begin drafting the next action plan for the 2022 midterm election year in Fall 2021.