

**Voter Friendly Campus Plan**  
**Emory University**  
**May 31, 2024**

**Summary**

This report, developed by the Emory Votes Initiative, outlines the planned activities at Emory University campus (both Atlanta and Oxford) to increase voter engagement on campus during the 2024 elections. The goal of this plan is to increase voter turnout on our campus to 80% in the 2024 elections, and more generally, to build a strong ethic of civic engagement and education in our community. The plan will be implemented by the Emory Votes Initiative.

**Leadership and Coalition**

The Emory Votes Initiative (EVI) is the primary organization responsible for carrying out our university's strategic plan. EVI was founded in 2018 as a grassroots organization aimed at helping every member of the Emory community to "operationalize their civic duty." Since then, EVI has grown considerably and become an institutional presence on campus, with representation across the students, faculty, and staff, as well as a full-time staff coordinator that manages the operations of the organization. This document, developed by the Emory Votes Initiative, outlines our strategy for increasing campus turnout for the 2024 primary and general elections and beyond.

EVI is led by a steering committee with representation from staff, faculty, and students: Donald Beaudette (Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Oxford College); Alex Bolton (Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science); Adam Byrnes (EVI intern); Rick Doner (Professor, Department of Political Science); Laura Gafnea (Director of Community Relations, Oxford College); Hannah Gebresilassie (Coordinator, Civic and Community Engagement/Emory Votes Initiative); Lauren Huiet (EVI intern); Khegan Meyers (EVI intern); Marjorie Pak (Senior Lecture, Program in Linguistics); Natalie Raymond (Assistant Director of Student Involvement & Leadership, Oxford College); James Roland (Director of the Office of Civic and Community Engagement); Mike Sandifer (EVI graduate intern); Dana Smiley (EVI intern); Maura Toole (EVI intern); Katherine Vigilante (retired Senior Lecturer in Political Science, Oxford College); Sebastiane Wall (EVI intern).

EVI operates within a dispersed network of groups on our campus that have the common goal of increasing the political engagement of our community (e.g., Fair Fight, H-STAT, Rollins Election Day Initiative, Young Democrats, Emory Political Review, Emory NAACP). We see our role as serving that mission directly through our own activities, but we also seek to leverage the enthusiasm of other groups as well. This manifests in a number of ways including: 1) regular communication with other groups; 2) partnerships on specific projects; 3) connecting other groups on campus to one another to help build partnerships even if EVI is not directly involved in these activities; 4) amplifying events and communications from other groups through our newsletter and web presence. Beyond our campus, we also sought to engage with groups and networks outside the university that could support our efforts and help us learn about effective practices at other university.

In particular, some external groups we regularly communicated, partnered, or worked with in the past included the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, the Commission on Presidential Debates, Democracy Works, Georgia Voter Summit, NASPA Voter Friendly Campus program. Emory has also partnered with DeKalb County to host a voting precinct on campus since the 2022 elections.

### **Institutional Commitment**

EVI has received strong support from our administrative, academic, and student partners around campus. The EVI, is an initiative that is housed in the Office of the Provost and Campus Life. It has in the past and present received significant financial commitments from both as well as the Office of Community and Civic Engagement to fund its operations. EVI is currently administered by a full-time staff member.<sup>1</sup> Beyond EVI specifically, campus leaders have expressed strong support for voting and civic engagement and taken affirmative actions to support it, such as establishing a voting precinct on Emory's campus and extended paid time off for employees to vote.

We have also received strong support for including civic engagement and voting information in some curricular components in Emory College of Arts and Sciences. For example, for the past five years, the first-year orientation class has featured content developed by EVI on making your voice heard in your community and voting.

### **Goals and Evaluation**

Our specific goals for the 2024 election cycle are:

- Voter registration rate of 90% among undergraduate and graduate students
- Voter turnout rate of 80% among undergraduate and graduate students
- 3,000 new TurboVote sign-ups
- Hold events on campus to raise awareness of the elections and promote voter education

We will use our campus's NSLVE reports (when available) to assess our campus's registration and turnout rates. TurboVote provides real time reports on the number of individuals signing up through our institutional site. EVI will also track event attendance and tabling contact volume on an ongoing basis to understand our impact on campus.

Throughout the implementation of our strategy, we will hold biweekly steering committee meetings that will evaluate on an ongoing basis areas where we are successful and areas where we need to reassess our approach. We view this continuous evaluation as essential to ensuring a successful plan. Some of the metrics we use (such as NSLVE data) will not be available until after the election cycle, however, we have access to real time information on TurboVote sign ups, event attendance, pledge uptake, and more, that we can use to understand our progress toward these goals during the election cycle.

In the longer term, we see our efforts as an integral part of Emory's commitment to educating civically engaged and ethical global citizens. Our students will go on to become leaders in the

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<sup>1</sup> The position is currently vacant, but we are on track to fill it during the summer. This will be crucial for the success of our action plan.

public and private sectors. In fostering a culture of civic engagement on campus, we can help our students to develop the skills ensure their voices will be heard now and into the future.

### Landscape

Emory University has roughly 15,000 students, about half graduate and half undergraduate. The undergraduate student population is divided between the Atlanta campus and Oxford College of Emory University in Oxford, GA. The table below lists the registration and turnout rates for Emory, as well as all universities that participate in NSLVE for comparison.

Year	Emory Reg. Rate	Nat'l. Reg. Rate	Emory Turnout	Nat't. Turnout
2012	72.7%	69.0%	40.6%	46.9%
2014	62.1%	64.9%	17.9%	19.1%
2016	75.1%	70.6%	47.4%	50.4%
2018	76.4%	73.3%	41.1%	39.1%
2020	85.1%	(unknown)	73.0%	66%

For many years, Emory’s turnout rate lagged the national rate, though in 2018 and 2020 we have exceeded it. Our campus never received NSLVE reports for the 2022 elections, so we do not have information about our registration and turnout rates in that election cycle. Overall, however, we hope to build on this progress during the 2024 election cycle.

### Planned Activities

Voter Registration: In the summer and early fall of 2024, we plan to make a major push to encourage students to register to vote. This is critical, as many students choose to register in Georgia after moving here from out of state and deadlines for registration occur shortly after many students arrive on campus. Registration efforts require us to inform students about voter registration requirements as well as to get students the materials they need to register, whether here in Georgia or another state they consider their residence. We plan to do this through the following means:

- Encouraging students to sign up for TurboVote, which allows them to access information about voter registration. First-year students will have this included as part of their orientation check list.
- University-wide National Voter Registration Day celebration to publicize upcoming deadlines and the importance of registration and voting this fall
- First year students will receive information about voting and registration through their required orientation course, ECS 101.
- Communications through EVI [Instagram](#) and [website](#) about the importance and process of registration
- Work with communications in different Emory units and student organizations, such as the Emory Wheel, to advocate for including information about voting to their audiences
- Regular distribution of EVI newsletter that contains registration information
- We plan to table regularly during Wonderful Wednesdays and at events on campus to give members of the community the opportunity to register to vote and raise awareness of voter registration requirements.

- Classroom visits to encourage students to register and learn more about the upcoming election.

Voter Education: EVI views voter education as central to our mission, so that members of our community can express their opinions at the ballot box with confidence. Many of our students vote in Georgia, where rules about voting have in some areas changed recently, so it is also important to communicate clearly with our community about these changes.

- We will use our website and social media platforms to make election and candidate information accessible to our community. Some of this may be produced by EVI but we also hope to link to trusted, non-partisan sources that also are engaged in voter education work (e.g., [Branch](#)).
- We hope to hold events on campus that will educate voters about the upcoming elections and generate enthusiasm about voting in partnership with other organizations on campus. For example, in past election cycles we have hosted events with election-related speakers with the Department of Political Science and partnered with student organizations to promote voting at the on-campus precinct. We hope to continue this type of programming that will engage our community and educate them about the stakes of the elections and how they can participate.
- The ECS 101 course for first-year students will include information about the importance of elections and how government and public policy impact their daily lives and issues they care about.
- EVI will continue to engage faculty and encourage discussions in the classroom about voting and elections. We have created a [Faculty Toolkit](#) with ideas about how to do this as well as a [guide](#) for managing potentially contentious discussions about elections created in collaboration with the Laney Graduate School and Center for Faculty Development and Excellence. Many of these materials will be updated over the summer for use in Fall 2024.

Voter Turnout: The goal of these efforts is to encourage every eligible member of our community to express their opinions at the polls. We plan to undertake several activities to facilitate this:

- Since the 2022 elections, Emory University has had a voting precinct located on campus. The precinct will be open both during the early voting period and on Election Day. All registered voters in DeKalb County (which includes the university and the majority of our students that register in Georgia) may vote at the precinct during early voting. EVI will help to communicate to the community about this new precinct, provide volunteers to welcome voters to the precinct, and table around campus to raise awareness about the ability of DeKalb voters to cast ballots there during the early voting period. On Election Day, voters must go to their assigned precinct (which may or may not be the Emory precinct depending where someone lives), so we will also work to help individuals on that day find their assigned precincts.
- In the past, we have helped to develop transportation plans for individual students that are figuring out how to get to their assigned precinct. We hope to do that again this year. We also plan to inform students about non-partisan groups that provide transportation, such as Fair Fight.

- Many of our students vote in their home states, so it is imperative to also focus efforts on informing students about the absentee voting process: deadlines and forms for requesting ballots; where they can access materials for mailing forms; deadlines for returning ballots to ensure they arrive in time to be counted.
- We plan to table regularly on campus to make sure everyone in our community is informed about how they can vote and encouraged to make a plan to do so.
- We are planning to continue an event we began in 2022 called “Party to the Polls,” where students march together from a central area on campus to the voting precinct during the early voting period.

### **Reporting**

All of EVI’s action plans, reports, and data are publicly available. We have given permission for ALL IN Challenge to publish them and we disseminate them through our [website](#). EVI views this as an important part of informing and motivating our community and encouraging accountability.