Georgia Institute of Technology
Voter Friendly Campus Plan 2024

Developed by the Center for Student Engagement

I. Executive Summary

The Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) is a top ten public research university with nearly 40,000 students across its main campus, satellite campuses in France and China, and online learning programs. The motto of Georgia Tech is "Progress and Service," and the institution seeks to develop leaders who advance technology and improve the human condition. The main campus is situated in the vibrant city of Atlanta, Georgia, which is home to the state's capital. The proximity to the state legislature presents unique opportunities for engagement and collaboration which the institution can leverage through intentional partnerships and educational initiatives for our students. Our nonpartisan democratic engagement plan for the 2024 election builds on our unique strengths to increase civic engagement through student voter registration, education, and turnout in the upcoming election season.

The Tufts University National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) campus report reveals information about the Georgia Institute of Technology voter engagement that has shaped this action plan. Like most campuses, Georgia Tech saw a significant increase in voter rates from the 2016 election to the 2020 election, with 71.4% of eligible students participating in the 2020 election cycle. When comparing the 2016 voting data with that of 2020, it is evident that Georgia Tech is making progress in terms of increases among students registered to vote, as well as those who actually vote in elections. In 2020, Georgia Tech's institutional voting rate was above the national average. Our plan seeks to intentionally build on the strong foundation of voter engagement.

Given that voting is habit-forming and research demonstrates young voters will usually continue this habit in future elections, Georgia Tech seeks to develop this habit within our student population. Through the introduction of new voter education initiatives and integration of civic learning into existing programs, we hope to create a future generation of active and engaged citizens. The Center for Student Engagement, which includes the Civic Engagement office, will serve as the campus lead for this plan. As this will be our first year seeking the Voter Friendly Campus designation, our focus is on creating a framework that we can build on in subsequent years.

II.   Leadership

The Center for Student Engagement at Georgia Tech will coordinate and oversee the institution's work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement. The Center's mission is to empower students and student organizations to catalyze belonging and create an engaging campus community. Civic Engagement is just one of the areas that supports the Center's mission, while also focusing specifically on connecting students to civic learning and engagement opportunities. The oversight of this plan will be the direct responsibility of the Director of Civic Engagement, who will chair the leadership team comprised of representatives from campus departments, student organizations, and community partners.

The leadership team will oversee the planning, execution, and evaluation of the action plan, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently, and goals are met. Regular meetings will be held to track progress, address challenges, and celebrate milestones. By fostering a collaborative environment and leveraging the strengths of our diverse campus community, the leadership team will work diligently to create a culture of civic engagement and significantly increase voter participation among our students.

Our leadership team includes the following representatives:

Jayde Nelson – Director of Civic Engagement

Dr. Kristina Clement – Associate Dean/Director, Center for Student Engagement

Mac Pitts – Director of Student Media

Julia Haley- Executive Vice-President of Student Government Association

Student Representative – Vice-President of External Relations, Student Government Association

Student Representative – Voters of Tomorrow at Georgia Tech

Staff Representative – Office of Institute Relations

Staff Representative – Fulton County Board of Elections

Kevin Cone – Georgia Tech Athletics

III.   Commitment

Georgia Tech prides itself on promoting progress and service to the greater community. One of the strategic goals of the institution is to empower people of all backgrounds and stages of life to learn and contribute to technological and human progress. Another goal is to cultivate a culture of well-being and create an environment of holistic learning where all members of our community can grow and learn to lead healthy, purposeful, and impactful lives. Active participation in civic learning and democratic engagement aligns with the strategic mission and goals of the institution.

Civic learning and democratic engagement are housed in the Center for Student Engagement in the Student Engagement and Well-Being cabinet area at the Institution. The oversight of voter engagement programming is incorporated into the role of the Director of Civic Engagement. The Civic Engagement office applies a student-centered approach for students to develop and clarify identity, to understand others, and to promote positive social change. While Civic Engagement focuses specifically on co-curricular opportunities for students, opportunities to engage with the community may also come in the form of academic based community service courses and departmental sponsored outreach programs. To this end, Civic Engagement staff collaborate with a variety of offices across campus on civic engagement initiatives.

This action plan will begin Summer 2024 and continue through the 2024-2025 school year, being revised again Spring 2025. Implementation and revisions will be spearheaded by the Office of Civic Engagement in collaboration with the Center for Student Engagement, as well as campus and community partners.

This action plan aims to:

1. Increase awareness and understanding of the voting process among students
2. Facilitate easy and widespread voter registration among students
3. Ensure high student turnout on Election Day and make voting as accessible as possible.
4. Leverage peer influence to encourage voter registration and turnout among students.

IV.   Landscape

Georgia Tech is a public 4-year institution located in the southeastern United States. Georgia Tech has consistently been ranked as one of the top public universities with nationally ranked engineering, business, and computer science programs. Georgia Tech ranks first in the state of Georgia for return on investment and career placement. The Institute plays a leading role in the Georgia Research Alliance, a centerpiece of the state's economic development strategy. The campus is also home to the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), which conducts applied research to meet the needs of government and industry. The integration of academic excellence, pioneering research, and industry partnerships positions Georgia Tech at the forefront of innovation and technological advancement.

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Georgia Tech has 47,946 students. The student body has about 19,500 undergraduate and 28,400 graduate students. The undergraduate population is about 39% female and 61% male, with significant representation from various racial and ethnic groups: around 38% White, 26% Asian, 9% Hispanic or Latino, 7% Black or African American, and 20% International students. Approximately 60% of Georgia Tech's undergraduate students are from the state of Georgia, while the remaining 40% include a combination of out-of-state and international students.

Voting laws:

Georgia's voting laws have undergone significant changes in recent years, with the passage of Senate Bill 202 (SB 202) in 2021. These changes have been the subject of extensive debate and legal challenges, with proponents arguing they ensure election integrity and opponents claiming they may disproportionately affect minority voters and restrict access to voting. Key changes have been noted below:

1. **Voter Identification**: Georgia requires voters to present a valid photo ID to vote in person. Acceptable forms of ID include a Georgia driver's license, state or federal government-issued ID, a U.S. passport, or a military ID. For absentee ballots, voters must provide their driver's license or state ID number, or the last four digits of their Social Security number.

2. **Absentee Voting**: Voters can request an absentee ballot without needing a specific reason. However, the time frame to request absentee ballots has been shortened, and voters must now provide identification information when applying for an absentee ballot. The use of drop boxes for absentee ballots has been restricted, with their availability limited to early voting locations and only during early voting hours.

3. **Early Voting**: The law mandates a minimum of 17 days of early voting, including two mandatory Saturdays. Counties also have the option to offer early voting on two Sundays.

This aims to provide ample opportunity for voters to cast their ballots before Election Day.

4. **Provisional Ballots**: Voters who arrive at the wrong polling location can only cast a provisional ballot if it is after 5 PM on Election Day and they cannot reach their correct polling place in time. Otherwise, they are directed to their correct precinct.

5. **Polling Place Changes**: Counties must give more notice before changing polling place locations, ensuring voters are adequately informed about where they need to vote.

6. **Election Observers**: The law grants more access to partisan poll watchers and allows them to observe both the handling of absentee ballots and the counting of votes, under specified guidelines to prevent interference.

7. **Food and Water Distribution**: The law prohibits distributing food and water to voters waiting in line within 150 feet of a polling place or within 25 feet of any voter in line, though self-service water stations can be made available.

8. **Voter Roll Maintenance**: The state continues its practice of maintaining and updating voter rolls to ensure accuracy, which includes removing voters who have not participated in elections over a specified period and have not responded to notices.

Key Voter Registration Deadlines

Monday, October 7, 2024 - Voter Registration Deadline
Monday, October 14, 2024 – Friday, November 1, 2024 – Early Voting Locations Open
Friday, October 25, 2024 – Absentee Ballot Request Deadline
Tuesday, November 5, 2024, 7 p.m. – Absentee Ballot Return Deadline
Tuesday, November 5, 2024 – Georgia General Election

Georgia Tech has authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) and will receive campus voting data for the 2022 election in fall 2023. Our NSLVE authorization runs through 2033.

Our 2020 campus voting rate was 71.4%. Our 2020 campus voter registration rate was 86.5%.

Our 2018 campus voting rate was 46.1%. Our 2018 campus voting rate was 81.4%.

Georgia Tech has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals of recognition for past elections: 2020 Gold.

Georgia Tech participates in the following initiatives to support the development and implementation of our nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts on campus: National Voter Registration Day (2020, 2022); National Voter Education Week (2022); Vote Early Day (2022).

V.   Goals

<u>Short Term Goals</u>

By the end of 2024, the leadership team will expand to include at least two faculty and academic professionals, so discussions of curriculum integration can begin.

By the end of 2024, a student ambassador team will be formed and trained to carry out on-going voter education programs and campaigns.

<u>Long Term Goals</u>

By 2028, student voting rates at the institution will increase by 5 percentage points compared to 2020 turnout levels to 76.4%.

By 2028, the team will establish relationships with metro Atlanta counties (Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale) to facilitate voter information to students who maintain registration in their home community.

VI.   Strategy

Georgia Tech is committed to enhancing nonpartisan democratic engagement and bolstering student voter participation through a multifaceted approach. We will implement various strategies, including voter information tabling during key events like new student orientation and National Voter Registration Day, alongside GT 1000 classroom presentations aimed at educating students about the importance of civic engagement and their role in the democratic process.

Georgia Tech will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

<u>Voter Education and Awareness Campaign</u>

Objective: Increase awareness and understanding of the voting process among students.

Action Steps:
- Workshops and Seminars: Host regular workshops and seminars on voter registration, the importance of voting, and how to research candidates and issues.
- Tabling: Set up information booths in high-traffic areas on campus with resources about voter registration deadlines, polling locations, and absentee voting.
- Social Media Campaign: Utilize the university's social media channels to share important voting information, deadlines, and encourage students to participate in the election process.

Evaluation/Reflection:
- Number of workshops and seminars held.
- Number of students attending these events.
- Engagement metrics on social media posts (likes, shares, comments).

Election Day Support and Engagement

Objective: Ensure high student turnout on Election Day and make voting as accessible as possible.

Action Steps:
- Election Day Shuttle Service: Provide transportation to local polling stations for students who need it.
- Polling Location on Campus: Work with local election officials to establish a polling place on campus, if possible.
- Election Day Rallies and Reminders: Host rallies and events on Election Day to remind students to vote and create a festive, participatory atmosphere.

Evaluation/Reflection:
- Number of students utilizing shuttle services.
- Number of votes cast at the on-campus polling location.
- Attendance at Election Day rallies and events.

Peer-to-Peer Voter Engagement Program

Objective: Leverage peer influence to encourage voter registration and turnout among students.

Action Steps:
- Student Assistants (Ambassadors): Recruit and train a team of student voter ambassadors who can promote voting within their social circles, residence halls, and student organizations.
- Classroom Announcements: Have voter ambassadors give brief presentations in GT 1000 classes about the importance of voting and how to register.

Evaluation/Reflection:
- Number of student voter ambassadors recruited and trained.
- Number of classroom presentations and peer interactions conducted.
- Participation rates in peer challenges and feedback from participants.

As we embark on the first year of our Voter Friendly Campus plan, evaluation of programs and services implemented based on our strategy will be important for determining next steps. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data will be utilized to get a holistic picture of voter engagement. We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

Georgia Tech will use the National, Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement to evaluate the increase of student voting by comparing our campus voter turnout and voter registration rates to past elections to measure progress.

Program participation will be tracked at all events, which will provide us with data regarding who the campaign is reaching and what demographics will need to be more specifically targeted in the future. Comparing this information with NSLVE data can help us understand better how to reach new audiences.

Focus groups will be conducted with participants in various engagement strategies to evaluate program effectiveness.

Survey distributed to students participating in programs and events to evaluate learning outcomes.

VIII. Reporting

Our campus action plan will be posted in various locations which allows for accountability and transparency to our campus community. Our reporting will also allow interested members of our campus to find out about how to join in or support our efforts in amplifying our impact and reducing duplicative efforts across campus.

Locations that our report will be shared with include, but are not limited to:

1. Students via listserv
   a. The student listserv is an email distribution list that includes all enrolled students within the institution and allows for widespread and consistent communication from the Center for Student Engagement.

2. Office of Civic Engagement landing page
   a. The landing page on our website will host the voter campus action plan and NSLVE reports making the information easily accessible to students, faculty, staff and community members.

3. Campus and Community Partners
   a. As described before, our campus and community partners will include local government agencies, non-profit organizations and other civic areas that collaborate regularly with our office.

4. Student Engagement and Well-Being (SEWB) Leadership Teams
   a. This team includes representatives from various departments and by providing the voter campus action plan and NSLVE reports will ensure that non-partisan engagement is understood to be discussed into a broader SEWB strategies.

5. SEWB listserv
   a. Sharing the reports through this listserv keeps key stakeholders informed and encourages them to incorporate civic engagement activities into their programs and services.

6. Politically based registered student organizations
   a. Politically based registered student organizations (RSOs) include groups such as College Democrats, College Republicans, Young Libertarians, and other politically active student groups. These RSOs can also provide valuable feedback and help in organizing events that promote civic engagement on campus.

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/georgia-institute-of-technology/.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our past NSLVE reports, which can also be found on our campus page above.