

ALL-IN: Campus Action Plan 2018-19 About Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw State University is a comprehensive multi-campus public university located in Cobb County within northwest metropolitan Atlanta, and is the third largest institution within the University System of Georgia with over 35,000 students. In January 2015, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia approved the consolidation of KSU with nearby Southern Polytechnic State University. The new consolidated university now serves over 35,000 students on two primary campuses located in Kennesaw and Marietta, both within Cobb County. Cobb County has been one of the fastest growing counties within the Atlanta metropolitan area. The university has additional smaller educational sites around the metro area and one international education site in Montepulciano, Italy. In addition to degree seeking students, KSU serves over 17,000 students through continuing and professional education courses.

The university is relatively young, with the Kennesaw campus starting as a junior college in 1963, serving primarily a non-traditional population, predominantly women from the local community. On-campus housing was added to the Kennesaw campus in 2002, and NCAA Division I football began in 2015. The current NSLVE data only reflects the Kennesaw campus from before the consolidation. The former Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) was founded in 1948 as The Technical Institute. The Southern Polytechnic name is retained within one of the 13 academic colleges at the new KSU, housed on the former SPSU campus now known as the KSU Marietta campus.

Overview

Moving into 2018, voter registration efforts continued as outlined in the previous plan, and KSU is excited to continue our partnership with TurboVote. The 2018 enhancement goals focus on voter education and engagement through:

- **Ease of Access to Voting:** The Student Government Association has begun researching the feasibility of establishing an on campus polling site for future elections, particularly for an advance voting polling site. In the meantime we will continue the transportation options we added in 2016 for advance voting and select Election Day polling locations strategically selected to maximize opportunity for students across all campuses.
- **Commitment to Civility:** Assess and enhance the institutional climate and culture. KSU has experienced significant change in leadership coupled with a variety of high profile conflicts, in many ways mirroring the national climate. In late 2016 we achieved a long-standing dream and created permanent Democracy Walls on both campuses, and experienced a fair level of engagement in 2017. We saw an increase in 2018 as a result of more intentional engagement,

student coverage, and promotion through our new Campus Election and Engagement Project (CEEP) Fellows . The university also hosted our first Creed Week in January 2018 which expanded awareness and commitment to the university's Owl Creed and the institution's aspirational values.

Immediate and Ongoing SMART goals include:

- Increase voter registration rates by 5% over the 2012 NSLVE data by 2020
- Increase voting rate by 10% over the 2012 NSLVE data by 2020
- Increase TurboVote participation rate by 15% by December 2018 over the July 2016 rate

Coalition

Building on the small American Democracy Project team that had served as primary coordinators of our annual Constitution Week activities, the Office of the Dean of Students assembled a multi- disciplinary team of institutional partners who committed to support this effort and our ALL IN Challenge pursuits. The KSU coalition includes:

- Associate Vice President for Student Affairs & Dean of Students (who also serves as Deputy Registrar for Cobb County Board of Elections and Registration)
- Associate Vice President for Economic Development and Community Engagement
 - Student Government Association President, SGA Senators, and students from various registered student organizations, fraternities and sororities
- Chair of the Department of Political Science & Faculty representatives
- Assistant Dean of Students for Student Life
- Executive Director for the Department of Leadership and Service
- Assistant Director for Civic Engagement, Department of Leadership and Service
- Director of Cultural and Community Centers
- Associate Director for Student Advocacy
- Coordinator of Assessment and Strategic Planning
- Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies and Assistant Director of Engagement
- Associate Dean of Library Systems
- Director of Parent and Family Programs

We strategically engaged a wide diversity of students, faculty, staff, and administrators, along with external partners from the League of Women Voters, Cobb County Board of Elections and Registration, and Office of the Secretary of State to ensure comprehensive buy-in and multi-

layered support. Internal partnerships across multiple Student Affairs and Academic Affairs units was critical for infusing our marketing efforts in the classroom, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities. We also partnered with Alumni Affairs and Parent & Family Programs to reach broad audiences that both contribute to civic engagement in their own right but also have influence upon our students.

Fall 2018 Plan Analysis

Building upon our past traditions, much of our work focused on Constitution Week, a theme programming experience that began on Constitution Day & Citizenship Day (September 17) and concluded on National Voter Registration Day (September 27). The extended week included a variety of speakers, discussions, and registration and education activities and also encourage ongoing democratic engagement. Building upon that anchor week, additional programming and service opportunities were added at strategic points throughout the fall to continually keep students engaged.

Voter Registration:

Our primary strategy was to maximize the KSU partnership with TurboVote and encourage everyone to create a TurboVote profile, even if already registered to vote, to ease coordination of absentee ballots when needed, change to a new local address to engage local issues, and/or receive election reminders via text and/or email. We pre-loaded the local addresses for all on-campus residents into the system to make it easier and increase accuracy, and provided these details to the county Registrar to ensure there were no accidental rejections due to address match errors. The Office of the Dean of Students created a dedicated Voter Registration and Education website with the links to both TurboVote and the Georgia My Voter Page, and used that page as a landing site to then direct visitors to other related activities. The direct link to that site is <http://deanofstudents.kennesaw.edu/resources/voter-registration.php> but given the length of the URL we asked our webmaster to create an easier “mask” site to auto-direct users, so for marketing purposes we promoted the site as vote.kennesaw.edu.

There was significant marketing of voter registration options, deadlines, and programming. In addition to the multiple dedicated blast emails sent by the Dean of Students to all students, employees, parents and alumni, multiple forms of social media were employed, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. Each message was tailored based on the time of distribution, with some promoting initial voter registration options, some reminding of upcoming deadlines, and some encouraging verification of registration, proper address, polling location, and/or how to request absentee ballots.

We continue to receive feedback from our students that their high schools heavily promote voter registration before graduating and through the Georgia motor-voter efforts students can easily register when they receive their driver’s license. Likewise, given the diversity of our student

body and our largest populations being incoming transfer students and non-traditional students who are all well over 18, these students enter our institution already registered. The efforts to continue verifying that our students are registered and provide avenues for updating registration is still critically important, though may not be as critical as other voter engagement needs.

Voter Education:

In addition to multiple e-blasts and social media postings directing students to TurboVote and the Georgia Secretary of State's app and website to access important nonpartisan voting information, the bulk of our programming efforts focused on Constitution Week and key follow up programs thereafter hosted in October and November. Some highlights of our programming efforts include:

- Democracy Wall Conversations: Students were invited to engage in conversation on our campus boards with questions posed by our CEEP Fellows,
- Student Government Association Policy Poster and Letter Writing Campaigns: Posters that highlight specific policies of interest to students as well as templates for writing letters to local representatives.
- Constitution Con 2018: Hosted by the Sturgis Library, this event included a panel discussion reviewing the important influence of the Constitution on our current systems, voter registration information, and pocket constitution booklets.
- Freedom of Expression Workshops: Offered to help students understand their rights and the current standards regarding Freedom of Expression within the University System of Georgia.
- Deep Dive in the Public Service Commission: An overview of the Public Service Commission and how they influence the use of energy consumption within our communities.
- Affecting Environmental Policy through Direct Democracy: Review of upcoming opportunities for Georgia residents to vote directly on environmental policies concerning land and water conservation and public transit.
- Mock Senatorial Debate: Hosted by the Campus Election and Engagement Project (CEEP) Fellows, a mock debate allowing students to explore various issues from multiple perspectives.

All programming offered directly through the coalition and/or the Student Government Association was specifically designed to be nonpartisan. Other politically and socially affiliated registered student organizations were free to choose whatever programmatic approaches and/or content they wished, though most opted for nonpartisan approaches to engage a broader audience.

Ballot Access:

Through our partnership with TurboVote, there is an easy mechanism to request absentee ballots at no cost to students. This was promoted as a key advantage of signing up for TurboVote, and was particularly marketed to on-campus residential students who preferred not to register using their local on-campus address but would not be able to return home to vote at their designated polling location.

Another critical resource that was heavily promoted was the Georgia Secretary of State's MVP site (My Voter Page - <https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>). The Secretary of State also created an app that could easily be downloaded and used to complete a variety of tasks, including all the features that TurboVote offers. Through this site it is easy to verify voter registration status, poll location, early voting locations, current elected officials, update registration information, request an absentee or provisional ballot, verify ballot status, and review a sample ballot for the upcoming election.

In addition to the materials distributed, representatives from the Cobb County Board of Elections and Registration brought the actual ballot voting machines to both campuses and provided demonstrations of how the technology operates to minimize the anxiousness new voters may experience when going to the polls.

Voter Turnout:

The Dean of Students coordinated all email blasts and social media postings to promote all of the voter registration, education, and awareness activities that ultimately reinforced the desired end goal: actually voting! Each election cycle there is at least one email blast with appropriate details and reminders. Knowing students do not always check their emails in a timely manner, all activities were also promoted through OwlLife, KSU's online student activities portal, and other traditional promotion mechanisms were used (distributing flyers around the campuses, asking faculty to make announcements to their classes, encouraging student leaders to use peer-to-peer communication channels).

An important component of our plan was to eliminate actual and perceived barriers to voting. Part of this plan included educating students about the ease and availability of absentee ballots, but more importantly ensure they understood how polling locations are designated. A challenge we have faced in years past is students not realizing on election day they can only vote at their designated polling location and end up unable to vote because they went to the wrong location. To proactively address this issue we focused on an early voting campaign to encourage students who were not choosing an absentee ballot option to go to the advance voting locations designated for the county. Unlike on election day, the only restriction when choosing a location

for advance voting is that the voters must choose a location within the county in which they are registered. Since the majority of our students are from the local area, mostly within the county in which the two campuses are located, this provided easily accessible locations with convenient hours across multiple days. The state also provided Saturday voting options.

Successes

- We saw an increase in participation on our campus Democracy Walls which was influenced by promotion conducted by our new CEEP Fellows.

- Registered over 400 students for the 2018 year

- Increase Constitution Week program attendance

- Establishment of the Campus Election and Engagement Project (CEEP) Fellows

- Large turnout for CEEP Fellows Mock Senatorial Debates

- Coverage from local media found here:

https://www.mdjonline.com/news/ksu-students-register-to-vote-at-annual-drive/article_b8a830bc-c10b-11e8-921c-876992bd0815.html?fbclid=IwAR0Q2TRe5MWKcLyxIGbCEE3Rz6MkV7xeKfGDklGBglH6JU4ngSdvwo2AoxA

Barriers

Despite our many successes, we experienced a number of challenges as well. Our most significant barriers include:

- Unauthorized voter registration activities on both campuses. During past election cycles we had received reports from students who thought they had completed the voter registration process by completing a form with a random canvasser walking on campus with a clipboard only to find out on election day they were not actually registered. To minimize this issue, many years ago the Dean of Students established a protocol requiring all parties involved in voter registration activities on campus to notify the Dean of Students Office in advance, and this past year required direct coordination of all activities through the Dean of Students office.

- Despite great efforts, some Constitution Week programs still saw small turnout of student participation.

- Continuous battle against the lethargic response to voting from student populations

Beyond 2018

Our coalition is committed to instilling a sense of moral obligation for democratic engagement and participation in every election, whether national, state, or local. The establishment of the CEEP Fellows provided excellent support for planning and implementing voter registration initiatives as well as marketing and recruitment. This resource proved useful and will be

explored further to continue finding ways to engage students in the democratic process.

In addition to student engagement growth, there has been an expanse of online resources and tools that can be utilized to engage and inform student voters which we would like to explore further. With the 2019 year being an off cycle year, it will be important to find ways to keep students engaged and informed about local events and systems that affect their daily lives. We hope to expand student's understanding of what it means to be a citizen and help them identify means by which they can be active in their communities.