

Executive Summary:

NYU Votes was created in summer 2018 by a team of administrators, faculty, and students who wanted to improve the student voting rate at NYU—ideally by making the process less mysterious and more accessible. The first goal was to improve the student registration and voting rate for the 2018 November midterm elections.

In the 2014 midterm elections, 91 percent of NYU students did NOT vote. Yes, we had a voting rate of exactly 9 percent—which was less than half of the already low national voting rate for college students, which was 19% in that election. So a group of us got to work on that—developing a simple but engaging marketing campaign; handing out thousands of donuts and pizza slices and NYU Votes stickers and buttons; sending emails targeting the specific deadlines and absentee requirements for students from every single state; and hosting numerous events on election issues and voting accessibility.

That November, in the 2018 midterm election, NYU's voting rate went all the way up to 37 percent—more than quadruple the 2014 number.

Since then, we've developed an even more elaborate plan, this year creating the inaugural class of 130 NYU Votes Ambassadors, who helped communicate our central NYU Votes election messaging across all our schools in a way that's most effective for those smaller communities. These teams got creative and connected directly with their communities by holding panel discussions, documentary screenings, virtual voter registration drives, contests, and other interactive events. We've also created "Vote Zone"—a presentation given to numerous schools, clubs, and other campus organizations—offering an overview of the voting history in America, the rules of voting, and how students can get involved; "Voting 101," a week of short answers to our communities most commonly asked questions; a bi-weekly voting newsletter; free stamp and envelope distribution to all student residence halls; an election toolkit featuring numerous graphics, including a series of Zoom backgrounds; and even an election eve wellness event offering mindfulness insights and techniques for students anxious about the days ahead.

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following:

Co-Directors

Christine Beluk, Assistant Director, Service and Leadership

Jason Hollander, AVP, Communications, University Relations and Public Affairs,

Central NYU Votes Committee:

Lynne Brown, SVP, University Relations and Public Affairs

C Cybele Raver, Deputy Provost, Professor of Applied Psychology

Christopher Echeverria, Assistant Director, Government Affairs

Ellyn M Toscano, Senior Director of Programming, Partnerships and Community Engagement, University Relations and Public Affairs
Eric Bross, Sr Director, Digital Communications
Kenneth Howard Zimmerman, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Service, Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
Steven Heuer, AVP, Government Affairs
Tom McIntyre, Director, External Affairs, NYU Washington, DC
Wilnelia Gutierrez, Chief of Staff, University Relations and Public Affairs

Commitment:

Our campus has signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

NYU Votes participated in and signed-on as an official partner in the national civic education campaigns National Voter Registration Day, Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day.

In the NYU University Senate, the Student Senators Council passed a resolution, endorsed unanimously by the Senate Executive Committee, for the creation of a University standing committee composed of students, faculty, and administrators to evaluate the NSLVE report, and the public release of the biennial NYU NSLVE Report on the NYU website.

The Office of the Provost supported the NYU Senate Executive Committee's recommendation that instructors accommodate students who miss class to participate in Election Day activities.

Landscape:

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Midterm 2018 voting rate was 37%.

Student enrollment: Total: 58,461, Undergraduate: 26,981, Graduate and Professional: 25,904, Noncredit Programs: 5,576.

Student demographics: (Fall Freshman Class of 2023) Asian/Pacific Islander: 19 percent; African American: 9 percent; Hispanic/Latino: 19 percent; White: 20 percent; International: 24 percent; Other: 9 percent.

Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

We'd like to move ahead of the collegiate national voting rate in 2020, and hope to increase our campus network (from 130 ambassadors to 200 ambassadors) across all campuses for the 2022 midterms.

Strategy:

In-person voter registration drives (in dining halls and other lobby areas), voter education events (e.g. film screenings, debates, lecture series, etc.), virtual voter registration drives (e.g. presentations to large groups, text banking events), virtual voter education events (e.g. film screening, lectures series, etc.), a pledge to vote drive, etc. We have also hosted numerous food (pizza, doughnuts, cookies, sandwiches, coffee) and swag giveaways. Our “NYU Votes” buttons became so popular that people were seen wearing them—and posting pics of them to social media—across the country.

A series of events through the John Brademas Center, NYU DC, the Brennan Center, Skirball, the Office of Global Inclusion, and more, have featured an overview of the greater NYU Votes effort, along with information on how students and others can get involved. A performance by the Steinhardt Verbatim Performance Lab—created in partnership with the Brademas Center and NYU Votes team to help mark Constitution Day—examined the history of voting rights in the US.

Our redesigned NYU Votes website simplified the voting process for all into three steps: registering, choosing a voting method (polling or mail-in), and staying alert for voting deadlines. We also have a newly-designed toolkit of various graphics and messaging that can be used by all communicators across the University, sized for all social media channels, Zoom backgrounds, emails, newsletters, digital screens, and more. We've also created an email—nyuvotes@nyu.edu—that has served as a source for any and all questions posed by the community. We have answered many hundreds, if not thousands, of voting questions throughout the semester. A user intake form on the website has also generated more than 60 additional ambassadors and sparked new events and efforts generated by general NYU community members.

Throughout the semester, NYU Votes has communicated with dozens of emails, social media posts, and placements in newsletters like NYU Weekly and Our NYU. We have featured numerous campaigns, including “Use Your Voice,” “Voting 101,” and “Text Ten Friends”—to create a diversity of messaging and to focus on the most urgent action items at each step of the election cycle.

From a Nov. 2 university-wide election eve wellness event featuring President Andy Hamilton to a range of late communications on wellness resources and programming, the NYU Votes campaign pivoted to anticipate the election anxiety affecting our community. We've also held several post-election events—featuring prominent NYU scholars—as a way to refocus the NYU

community, intellectually and civically. We are continuing to partner with and promote any affinity group wellness events that address the specific needs of various NYU communities.

NSLVE:

New York University has authorized NSLVE.

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

We look at social media engagement, email open and click rates, event attendance, and focus group responses. The evaluation will be done by the co-directors.

Reporting:

We will report our campus action plan and NSLVE reports in the following ways:

We will share some incarnation of the action plan, but will likely edit it down. Our campus NSLVE reports will be posted on our campus website and shared with the campus community.