Campus Vote Plan

Old Dominion University is a public research university located in Norfolk, Virginia, which enrolls approximately 25,000 students and has a high level of civic engagement and public service throughout the colleges and the co-curricular, including an emphasis on active civic engagement embedded in the institution's mission and vision statements. Our NSLVE reports show that our students are voting above the national average for student voter turnout for presidential elections, and historically slightly below average for midterm and local elections. The 2018 NSLVE for the midterm elections indicates a shift, with our students voting slightly above the national average.

Civic and democratic engagement efforts throughout the university are decentralized, and the institution is lacking a comprehensive, collaborative voter education and registration effort. The goal of this campus vote plan and the Voter Friendly Campus Designation is to make measurable steps towards institutionalizing voter engagement.

Coalition

In order to create a more collaborative and institution-wide effort for voter engagement, a coalition of stakeholders will be assembled for monthly meetings. Representatives should include members of the Center for Service & Civic Engagement, ODU Libraries, a student representative from the Student Government Association, a representative from the Political Science department, and a representative from the Dean of Students Office.

Voter Registration and Engagement Strategies

Voter Registration Drives

Many of our voter registration drives have been completed through third party groups who are on campus with the mission of registering students, but have not been specifically driven by the institution. With the addition of a Campus Vote Project fellow, we plan to do general as well as specifically targeted voter registration drives, and have a stock presentation with voter registration information that can be easily tailored to any audience.

General voter registration

Voter registration drives can take place outside on Kaufman Mall, as well as inside in the Webb Center – both high foot traffic areas, and can vary in time but several should overlap with the institution's "Activity Hour," an hour in the afternoon on Tuesdays and Thursdays when no student has class. Other "general" locations can include large classroom buildings (Batten Arts & Letters), the dining hall, and the Student Recreation Center

Departmental

Utilizing NSLVE data, we plan to target departments with low voter turnout in the 2014/2016/2018 elections, both in communicating with faculty about class

presentations, as well as targeting drives in specific classroom buildings related to these departments. Departments showing the lowest voter turnout rates in the last several elections include Biological & Biomedical Sciences, Computer & Information Sciences, Parks Recreation and Tourism Studies, Physical Sciences, and Visual and Performing Arts.

Distance Learning

In addition to on-campus instruction, ODU has a substantial online student and distance learning population, some who are still local but enjoy the convenience of online instruction, but also students located all over the country and globe who continue to take classes with us. Collaborating with Distance Learning about communicating voter registration information and the Campus Vote Project state student guides to students who may not be on campus to encounter a registration drive can be a step in the right direction to encourage active citizenship amongst all our students, not just those who are physically on campus.

Politically active organizations

We have several politically affiliated organizations on campus, primarily the Young Democrats and College Republicans, who work well together and organize various debates amongst each other, debate/election results watch parties, and candidate campus visits. We plan to more consistently communicate with both of these groups and offer to provide voter registration information at their events.

Classes

In addition to targeting classes in departments with low student voter turnout, there are a couple additional types of classes that may benefit from a voter registration drive. We have at least one service-learning class in every college, which engages students to apply their course material to a community based project, and these are often led by professors who are champions for service-learning and civic engagement in a higher education setting. We also have University 101 classes for certain groups of at-risk first year students, and they take a class in the fall semester to help acclimate them to university life and the institution's resources. We present multiple times in University 101 classes throughout the first month or two of school on how to stay involved and engaged on campus, and can either fold voter registration information into these existing presentations, or we can utilize our instructor contacts to request additional time set aside just for voter registration information.

Residence Halls

Working with Housing & Residence Life to complete voter registration drives for students, particularly those in the first-year halls, can lead to more student voter registrations, and can also help our Resident Assistants fulfill their programming requirements.

Off Campus Students

> While ODU enrolls about 25,000 students, only 6,000 or so are on campus living in our residence halls, meaning the majority of our students are online or are commuting to campus. We may be able to work with our Transportation & Parking Services office to allow a table and voter registration drive at key parking areas for our commuter students to encourage them to register, and particularly making sure we are highlighting the absentee voting option, for students who may travel a longer distance to campus each day and may not be able to run back to their polling place and wait in line to vote in between classes. We also have a newly formed Off Campus Student Life office, which can be a beneficial partner for us. Leaving voter registration and absentee ballot information in the office, having a campus vote fellow spend time in their off campus student lounge, include voter registration information in their off campus student information packet, etc.

Voter Education and Voter Turnout

Absentee Voting

> While students in Virginia are able to register at their university address and utilize their university ID as voter identification, many students will still stay registered at their permanent addresses. Coming up with a communication plan leading up to the absentee voter application deadline can increase voter turnout for our students who aren't registered in the area or aren't able to vote in person on election day. Absentee voter applications should be included in voter registration drives, to give to students who disclose they're registered to vote elsewhere.

Voter Education Efforts

> Creating and facilitating a campus wide voter issue education effort pre-election may not be feasible for us in this first election since working towards the Voter Friendly Campus designation, but leveraging existing resources can help in making sure our students are as education on the candidates and the issues as possible. We plan on providing students at voter registration tables and on our polling place transportation with nonpartisan voter issue guides, candidate information sheets, and sample ballots, and we plan on helping to promote programs on campus, both student and faculty run, that are already existing.

Polling Location Transportation

> Our Student Government Association has sponsored shuttles every 15 minutes to five different precincts that cover either our on campus student populations, or our off campus neighborhoods that have a high population of temporary student

residents. These were provided in the last presidential election, but not provided for the gubernatorial election last year. Involving SGA in the voter registration effort and encouraging them to continue to value student voter turnout even in smaller elections should allow more students the opportunity to vote in person. In addition, several of our precincts are within walking distance of campus. Working with SGA, residence halls, student organizations, etc., to organize scheduled times when groups of students can walk over together may encourage more students to make the trip to the polls.

Voter Incentive

We plan on making a small incentive program to encourage students who have vote. This can either be something physical that they can pick up on campus (food or a giveaway) that is voting themed, or being entered to win a raffle by utilizing the hashtag #MonarchsVote.

Assessment

NSLVE

Our primary goal is to increase voter registration and voter turnout for students, which will be measured by our NSLVE survey. For future elections, we hope to create a more comprehensive and institutionalized student education and registration process which will allow us to assess student knowledge of candidates and issues as well as knowledge of the voting process.