POMONA COLLEGE
All In Campus Democracy Challenge, 2018 Action Plan

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

17% of Pomona College students voted in the 2014 midterm elections. Seventeen percent. 249 votes out of an eligible population of 1451. The midterms return in 2018 and Pomona's voting rate must change.

The following plan outlines a strategy for increasing voter registration, fostering voter education, and increasing voter turnout. There is no finger-wagging below or didactic instruction. The strategy developed herein was inspired by the recognition that there is a profound civic incoherence on Pomona's campus. There is so much powerful political activism on campus. There is loud and forceful political dialogue. There are people organizing, debating, empathizing, respecting, disagreeing, and protesting. Yet there are so few votes.

This year, Pomona will participate in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge. Nationwide, 725 campuses are participating thus far, and each one has made a commitment to develop a non-partisan, collaborative plan like this, and to create a committee that unites disparate groups behind a shared mission. The student liaisons of the Politics Department this year will spearhead the effort and begin assembling that committee. Our strategy includes an unprecedented attempt at voter outreach done in a similar manner as a professional political campaign, invoking canvassing techniques and direct communication with as many students as possible. The projections, goals, overall strategy, and plans of this project are all below.

There is power in the vote. This year, we will help more students use it.

LANDSCAPE

Pomona College is a private, undergraduate, liberal arts institution, located in Claremont, California. It is the founding member of the Claremont Colleges, a group known as the "5Cs" that now also includes Pitzer, Harvey Mudd, Scripps, and Claremont McKenna Colleges. There are approximately 1,670 students currently enrolled. Students come from 63 nations and all 50 U.S. states, as well as Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and Guam.

According to a National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) study, 17 percent of eligible Pomona students voted in the 2014 midterm election. With 1,610 students enrolled in 2014, 249 voted. The population of eligible students did not include those under 18 and those classified as "non-resident aliens," totaling 159 people. The registration rate (eligible students registered to vote) was 64%. A large majority of students voted by mail, either with absentee ballots, formal mail ballots, or early voting ballots. Only 11.6 percent of those who voted did so in person, on Election Day. Pomona underperformed all institutions studied by NSLVE by 2 points but overperformed private bachelor's institutions by 2 points.

Nationwide, the 2014 midterms saw low turnout. Midterms always see lower turnout than presidential election years but even fewer voters participated in 2014 than in 2010. According to CNN exit polls, Americans between the ages of of 18 and 29 only accounted for 13 percent of the total vote, down from 19 percent in 2012. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center after the election exposed the mindsets of non-voters:

> *"among those who were registered to vote but chose not to, two-thirds (67%) gave reasons related to lack of time: 35% had work or school conflicts and 34% were too busy, ill, out of town or simply forgot. Two-in-ten (20%) registered non-voters say they either didn't like the candidate choices or issues on the ballot, didn't care about this election, or didn't have any or enough information to vote. And 10% of non-voters reported having a technical reason for not voting, either having missed the registration deadline, recently moving, or not have transportation to the polls."*[1]

Pomona has previously partnered with TurboVote, a national organization that provides students with registration forms, access to absentee ballot requests, and reminders of when and how to vote. TurboVote has set-up tables outside dining halls and emails have gone out to students, encouraging them to use the platform. Individual organizations have also conducted voting efforts but a vigorous, campus-wide effort has not been coordinated.

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[1]

http://www.people-press.org/2014/11/12/little-enthusiasm-familiar-divisions-after-the-gops-big-midterm-victory/

PROJECTIONS

Many predict that the 2018 midterm election will see higher turnout than 2014. There is some early evidence that more young people intend to vote in 2018 than in previous elections, but it is not conclusive.[2]

Furthermore, according to the Pew Research Center, half of registered voters say they are more enthusiastic than usual about voting, a large increase from 2014. Another positive sign that turnout may increase nationwide this November is the number of votes already cast in primaries. Turnout for both Democrats and Republicans is up in primaries, relative to 2014. These gains are especially pronounced for the Democrats who, as of July 27, 2018, had cast 84 percent more votes in primaries than in 2014, in part due to many competitive races.[3]

Pomona's voting rate should naturally rise in 2018. Many may be motivated by national attention on the race for control of the House and Senate, knowledge of competitive races in California or in their home states, and the fervor of support for, and criticism of, the president.

While hard to estimate, one might safely assume that Pomona's voting rate could naturally rise to 20 percent from 17 percent in 2014. Such an estimate assumes that Pomona maintains its current efforts at voter registration, education, and turnout.

GOALS

2018 will be the first year Pomona participates in the All-In Challenge. It will also be the first time a systematic effort at voting promotion will be attempted. Thus, our primary goal must be to test, develop, and execute a collaborative, campus-wide program that will promote the following outcomes among eligible Pomona College students:

1. Raise registration rates. Target in 2018 will be 75 percent.
2. Improve voter turnout. Target in 2018 will be 30 percent.
3. Foster voter education. Provide students with access to information about candidates, issues, and the potential impact of their vote. Organize events to promote political engagement.
4. Decrease barriers to voting. Help students identify as voters by promoting its importance, convenience, and approachability.

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[2] https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/7/18/17585898/young-voter-turnout-polls-midterms-2018

[3] http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/07/27/turnout-in-this-years-u-s-house-primaries-is-up-especially-on-the-democratic-side/

5. Encourage a long-term commitment to voter engagement on campus. Find partners on campus who will continue to work towards an integrated, wide-reaching, and sustained voting apparatus.

STRATEGY

In 2018, the Pomona College Politics Department will lead the initial All-In effort. In subsequent years, the department may still take a leading role, but a broader, campus-wide committee should oversee implementation of future plans. However, this year, the Politics Department, with its core of majors, intended majors, recent alums, professors, and students, will coordinate voter engagement.

The central strategy of this plan is for the department to implement a system that functions like a professional political campaign. In particular, a system that operates like a field team. In a campaign, the field team is responsible for direct voter engagement: knocking on doors and making phone calls. At various points in the campaign, the field team's efforts are directed at specific goals. At first, collecting signatures for ballot petitioning, then identifying supporters, and finally, turnout. Messaging and information sought can change throughout this process, but the question, "can _ candidate count on your support?" stays constant. In Pomona's case, that consistent question will be: "can I count on you to vote in the midterm election?"

Pomona is a small school. The eligible voter population should hover around 1,450 students this academic year. We can leverage the power of students who are already politically engaged to help connect with those who are not yet. Our goal should be making contact with every single student on Pomona's campus, and then following up with them throughout the fall.

At first, volunteers/organizers will ascertain whether the student is aware of the upcoming elections, whether they're registered or not, and whether they plan on voting absentee. At this stage, we will help students register with TurboVote, request absentee ballots, and inform them about the races in their area. This effort will occur in the two weeks before National Voter Registration Day on September 25.

Subsequent contact will come after October 6 when volunteers/organizers will check in and see whether students had received their ballots yet and if so, whether they had voted. We will offer students assistance on how to learn more about the candidates in their races or propositions on the ballot.

Finally, in the two weeks before November 6, volunteers/organizers will make sure those who said they would be voting had done so, and made plans with those students voting in person about when and how they will do so.

At each stage, it will be crucial for volunteers/organizers to make contact multiple times if necessary to confirm and remind students about each step in the process. This system is designed so that students do not feel overwhelmed all at once by the steps involved with voting,

and do not forget about each step on that path. Thus, it is critical that each step is actually taken on time.

In person contact is the preferable mode of contact for volunteers/organizers, but such contact can be hard to remember to do. Texting and Facebook messenger will be used instead to help volunteers/organizers reach many quickly, and stay organized about those they have, and haven't, contacted yet.

Like a campaign, a field director should oversee the operation, field organizers should be responsible for one class each, or if there's enough interest, half of a class, and volunteers/voter engagement liaisons should agree to be responsible for 30-60 students throughout the semester. While that number may sound daunting, the amount of people they're contacting will go down throughout the semester as people indicate that they're ineligible, don't want to participate, or confirm that they've voted.

It will be supremely important for the operation to be sensitive to non-eligible students. A volunteer/organizer should never put a student in the position of having to disclose why they're ineligible, question them on their answers, or chide them for not voting. Other forms of political engagement are critical beyond voting and this effort should always keep that in mind and encourage non-voters to participate in other ways.

This effort will not be presented, at any point, as a partisan endeavvor. This campaign is designed to foster civic engagement through voting. We are attempting to instill in students the sense that being a voter is an identity, a right, but also, a privilege that should not be taken lightly. Advocating on behalf of a particular party, cause, or candidate would diminish the long-term goals of this project in exchange for short-term gains.

PLAN

At the time of writing, there were three months until November 6, 2018, election day. This plan will be divided into those months.

August - Focus on *planning*
- Work with Dean of Students' Office and/or the Office of the President to reach freshman before Orientation
  - Email sent to all incoming students, with a special appeal to freshmen, before they reach campus with the TurboVote link
- Coordinate with ITS (Information Technology Service) to embed TurboVote link in more pages
  - Change language from TurboVote to "Register to Vote!"
- Publicize Pomona's work with All-In with the Communications office
- Integrate registration with Orientation
  - Look to Northwestern University's orientation registration efforts
  - Set-up registration tables

- ○ Consult with Residence and Housing Life staff to see if they will coordinate with voting efforts
- ○ Consult with Sponsors and RAs to coordinate voting efforts at pre-existing mandatory hall meetings
- Create supplementary material to assist with registration drives
  - ○ Vote impact – inspired by Bowdoin College, adapt with California
  - ○ Ballot Access - info regarding proof of residency, registering in California, the absentee ballot process and deadlines, TurboVote assistance
  - ○ Voter Education – information on key issues, stakes of midterm elections, election cycles, levels of government, where to find more information on races, candidates, propositions
- Create promotional materials
  - ○ Social media campaign planning
  - ○ Posters for campus and residence halls
  - ○ Other visual and performing art projects
- Message students going abroad
- Begin finding campus-wide committee members
  - ○ Outreach to campus organizations
- Establish resources within the Politics Department
  - ○ Outreach with professors to encourage registration in classes
  - ○ Begin planning events for Fall 2018 that will focus on elections and voting
- Begin recruiting volunteers for canvassing operation

September - Focus on *registration*
- Run registration tables
  - ○ Athletic events
  - ○ Orientation week: Registration party?
  - ○ Turf Dinner
  - ○ Jobs Fair
  - ○ All Politics Department events + hopefully other departments like History, IR, PPA, etc…
- Organize registration parties and events at Carnegie (Politics Department building)
- Begin canvassing operation
- Conduct social media campaigns + other communications blitzes
- Explore creation of a formal voting organization i.e. Pomona Votes
  - ○ Potential for positive incentives for voters like t-shirts, buttons (I'm a Voter, Pomona Votes)
- National Registration Day/Week

October - Focus on *education*
- Continue programming with more events and speakers
- Continue canvassing operation
- Pursue efforts at reducing barriers to voting

- - ○ Provide stamps for student ballots
    - ○ Explore expanded polling access i.e. transportation for Pomona students
  - ● Continue physical table efforts

November - Focus on *turnout*
- ● Broadcast poll location information on all possible channels
- ● Work with Dean of Students or President's Office to send out campus-wide communications
- ● Conclude canvassing operation with final push for absentee and mail ballots, and final encouragement for those voting in person to do so
- ● Organize election night party
  - ○ http://votetogetherusa.org
  - ○ Early voting party or election day party also possible
- ● Distribute prizes
  - ○ Prize for organizer/volunteer with the most confirmed turnout
  - ○ Prizes for dedication + creativity

EVALUATION

From the data collected by our organizers/volunteers, we should have an early sense of how effective our strategy has been. But a fuller and more conclusive determination of Pomona's voting rate will be available in Spring/Summer 2019 when our NSLVE report is released. At that point, we will distribute its findings as widely as possible.

Further evaluation will be conducted on the canvassing program to gauge its effectiveness.

LEADERSHIP

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