



ALL IN Action Plan for Princeton University 2020

Prepared November 2020

In the Nation's Service and the Service of Humanity

Princeton University's efforts to increase and institutionalize voter and civic engagement are led and sponsored by the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students with support from the Office of the President. The ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge is a non-partisan organization that encourages active and informed participation in American democracy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About Princeton Vote100

Vote100 is an intentional campus campaign aspiring for 100% of the undergraduate student body to vote and engage civically. Sponsored by the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students (ODUS) and led by an enthusiastic team of student leaders representing a myriad of academic and co-curricular interests, the Vote100 team works with communities across campus to encourage civic engagement in all forms. While voting initiatives were coordinated by students and ODUS for a number of years, the decision to launch Vote100 in 2015 was informed by underwhelming voter participation by college students nationally and at Princeton specifically. In the 2014 midterm election, only 10.5% of eligible Princeton students voted.

Our goal is to continue to highlight the critical importance of electoral and civic participation as an essential aspect of a vibrant democracy; we want every member of our community to pledge to participate in all future elections. Civic responsibility should be a foundational characteristic of what it means to be a Princetonian.

The Pledge

"I pledge to register to vote and vote in all future annual elections and take the steps necessary to remain an informed voter, exercising my civic responsibility."

OR, for those not eligible in the US elections,

"I pledge to cast a ballot in elections in which I am an eligible voter or to take on personally meaningful civic issues in a purposeful way."

A research article by the Department of Politics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst demonstrates how pledging to vote prior to the 2016 Presidential Election increased the likelihood of voting.¹

¹Costa, Schaffner, et al., "Walking the walk? Experiments on the effect of pledging to vote on youth turnout" <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?type=printable&id=10.1371/journal.pone.0197066>



2020 Goals

1. Ensure Princetonians turn out in record numbers for the 2020 general election
2. Maintain the momentum Vote100 built after this election cycle concludes
3. Expand Vote100 to include graduate students and faculty
4. Participate and win the Ivy League Votes Challenge
 - a. “Most Innovative Program” according to a checklist of collective commitments to increase democratic engagements
 - b. “Highest Voter Turnout Improvement” with a 20% increase in eligible voter turnout in 2020

Efforts to Date

Only 10.5% of eligible Princeton students voted in 2014. With the combined efforts of students and administrators, Vote100 has continued since its founding in 2015 to increase voter registration and foster a campus culture around voting. Unique links to administration support which allows us to integrate voting/civic engagement into students’ lives from many angles like orientation, social media, residential life, and extracurricular life.

2016 Presidential Election

Vote100 hosted a series of on-campus events to encourage students to vote either on campus at our centralized polling location or their home districts. The Vote100 initiative hosted debate-viewing events with faculty panelists before the debates to provide a contextual framework for viewing. The first debate attracted over 800 people, and subsequent events attracted between 200 and 300 people and were shown in Whig Hall.

A key strategy for the 2018 Vote100 initiative was to leverage social media as a place where students could not only influence their Princeton classmates, but their social networks in their home districts. In addition to regular voter registration drives in the Frist Campus Center, we created opportunities for students to make voting-related social media posts.

The evening of the election, we held a campus-wide party at Whig Hall for students to gather and watch the results. Approximately 1500 undergraduates attended the event. While we had spirited and enthusiastic engagement from undergraduates throughout the election season, 51.4% of eligible Princeton undergraduates did not cast a vote in the election (per data from NSLVE). We were disappointed in these results and focused on how to maintain and improve upon the gains we made in 2016 over 2014 as we approached the midterm elections in 2018.

2018 Midterm Election

Over the summer, administrators and students developed the centralized brand for Vote100 still used today. They built out a built leadership cohort with recommendations from ODUS, Athletics, Office of the Dean of College (ODOC), and other campus partners to ensure the group encompasses all of campus. ODUS hosted Mike Birbiglia, Jean Grae, John Hodgman, Roy Wood Jr., and surprise guest Jon Stewart for “[Stand-Up & Vote](#),” an evening of stand-up comedy and voter registration in Richardson Auditorium, the most iconic performance space on campus with an audience of 860. Students were registered by Vote100 Cohort Leaders, and proceeds went to non-profit organizations that register voters and encourage voter turnout.



ODUS and Vote100 Cohort Leaders continued with a brick and mortar strategy with tabling in Frist Campus Center. There were computers on site for students to take the pledge, candy, Vote100 stickers, and baseball hats for students who got five others to take the pledge. Vote100 provided NJ registration forms, access to print other state forms, absentee ballot request information, and stamps. Various libraries and locations had NJ voter registration forms as well. Vote100 promoted profuse messaging with tabling, website resources, social media, emails to students, and even table tents in dining halls. On Election Day, ODUS sponsored a large photo campaign with large VOTE letters to celebrate the day and cosponsored the Election Watch Party with the American Whig-Clisosophic Society (Whig-Clio), the USG Senate, and other campus partners.

A summary report of our 2018 Midterm Election work is attached as an addendum to this report.

2019 Campaign for the Class of 2023 and Local Elections

With the focus on state and local elections engagement in 2019, Vote100 cohort leaders designed video and social media campaigns to welcome new students for a long year of electoral activity to come. Cohort leaders put together video messaging to encourage the Class of 2023 to be the first class to fully participate in the Vote100 Pledge in order to start competition between classes. Cohort leaders in the New Jersey area organized to register the Class of 2023 during First Year Check In, and an administrator presented during residential college advisor (RCA) training and the Freshman Scholars Institute (FSI). Additionally, Vote100 incentivized the pledge among first years by collaborating with RCAs: any advisory (zee) group that completely filled out the pledge would get a sponsored study break.

Vote100 cohort leaders tabled at the activities fair and encouraged students to take the pledge, register to vote and request an absentee ballot. For National Voter Registration Day (NVRD), Vote100 collaborated with the Asian American Student Association, featuring flyers and tabling for the last deadlines to register for the election. With the Use Your Voice photo campaign, students informed their peers why they voted leading up to November 3. Vote100 gave out donuts and beanies to voters to celebrate civic participation on Election Day.

In 2019, Princeton University won a Gold Seal from the ALL IN Challenge for having campus voting rates between 40-49% in the 2018 midterm election.

2020 PLAN

Current Voting Rates and Goals

The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) is an initiative by Tufts University's Institute for Democracy and Higher Education that provides eligible student registration and voting rates. **A 2014 midterm voting rate of 10.5% saw a 33.2 point increase to 43.6% in 2018, 4 points higher than the national average. A 2012 presidential election voting rate of 29.4% saw a 19.2 point increase to 48.6% in 2016 but this number was just 2 points below the national average.** Registration-to-ballot conversion was slightly better for these election cycles: 71.5% of students registered to vote and 67.9 of those registered voted. The NSLVE data contains other percentage breakdowns by method, age group, class year, gender, race/ethnicity, and field of study.

In preparation for the 2020 election cycle, it was the first year that the University proactively shared the NSLVE data with student leaders. Using the demographic data in the report, we set strategic goals for reaching students in particular academic disciplines, racial/cultural identity groups, and incoming students to improve our participation. We recognized that most students seem to prefer registering and voting in their home voting districts, so we need to provide information about New



Jersey registration but quickly pivot with resources once a student expresses interest in registering at home. We identified registration as a key goal; and talked publicly about our aspirational goal of every eligible voter being registered to do so. We also felt it was important to develop meaningful pathways of engagement for our undergraduates who are not eligible to vote in US elections - this population was intentionally included in all of our outreach and marketing efforts.

Spring 2020

Vote100 sustained engagement throughout the semester up to campus evacuation due to COVID-19. Cohort leaders and administrators collaborated with the local bookstore Labyrinth Books for a voter registration drive during course book selection at the beginning of the semester with forms, stamps, and envelopes. There was a Vote100 Day of Action for students, staff, faculty, and community members to write, call, and email their local representatives about issues pertinent to them as an alternative form of civic engagement to voting. Brunchin' with Vote100 brought together various student organizations working on voter and civic engagement and election programming for a joint information session. For this year's primary season, cohort leaders had registration forms for every state and absentee ballot requests for students.

Undoubtedly, the pandemic caused us to reimagine our campaign just as we were beginning a very public launch. For example, comedian Mike Birbiglia was coming back to campus in early May to perform in Richardson and provide a public kick-off to our work. We also had specific plans to reach out to potential members of the class of 2024 during our April Hosting events for admitted students.

ALL IN Challenge

Vote100 Cohort Leaders and administration convened in February with seven other Ivy universities in partnership with ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge to create the Ivy League Votes Challenge, modeled after the Big Ten Voting Challenge. Student leaders developed a checklist of common and competitive commitments for each school to use as a set of goals surrounding communications and engagement of departments and key groups on campus like athletics, residential life, human resources, and student life. Two winners will be announced at the end of the Challenge:

1. "Most Innovative Program" according to a checklist of collective commitments to increase democratic engagements
2. "Highest Voter Turnout Improvement" with a 20% increase in eligible voter turnout in 2020

The Challenge was also collaborative in nature; Vote100 communicated with representatives from the other Ivy League schools monthly to share strategies, data, and goals. Aside from reporting to their peers on the University's progress, the ALL IN Challenge group was active in promoting the competition among Princeton students as well. The group filmed, edited, and produced a video for the First-year Scholars Institute as well as one for first-year orientation. They developed marketing materials, slogans, and branding for ALL IN to be distributed throughout the (virtual) campus. Especially with the cancellation of Ivy League sports, ALL IN was designed to foster friendly competition between universities in order to increase voter turnout. Student leaders also collaborated on US Census messaging for Census Day with social media, videos, and emails to the student body to fill out their form conveniently located in TigerHub (a central academic processing system).

Vote100 Summer Fellowships and New Initiatives

Vote100 dove deep into work over the summer with the inaugural Vote100 Fellowship. With the loss of internships due to COVID-19 pandemic, the President's Office, among others, contributed to expanding the fellowship program initially sponsored



by ODUS and Whig-Clio. These paid summer internships were expanded from an original cohort of 12 to a final group of 26 undergraduates. Over 80 undergraduates applied for these internships, and the deep and accomplished pool allowed us to assemble a team of fellows who had a broad home geographic reach, including two international students who have done voter engagement work in their home countries, and an advantageous cross section of class years and academic fields of study. A copy of their job description is attached as an addendum to this report.

In addition to the 26 paid undergraduate fellows, we also funded six Preceptorial MPA Fellows from the Master in Public Affairs (MPA) Program at Princeton's School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA). The Preceptorial Fellows led precept discussions on issues relevant to this election cycle. Topics included election interference, gerrymandering, the Latinx vote and issues of immigration, and ranked-choice voting systems such as what is utilized in Maine. In addition to preceptorial discussions, each MPA Fellow led a presentation on their personal and academic "career path" so that undergraduates could benefit from seeing how academic and co-curricular experiences connect to professional and graduate study opportunities.

In an adjacent opportunity, we invited Professor Tali Mendelberg and PhD candidate Claire Willick to learn more about our fellowship program and talk about how we can connect our efforts to the course work offered in Politics 485 during the fall semester. Professor Mendelberg's class is going to review our Vote100 efforts and give us feedback on the effectiveness of our work since it was a public and broad-reaching initiative at Princeton.

To meet our goal of better partnership with faculty, we established a Vote100 [Faculty Advisory Committee](#) with thirteen of the most prominent scholars on campus. The committee proved to be an immeasurably helpful resource as we created communication plans with schools and academic departments across campus. The faculty helped us create a resource guide for faculty and staff on the Vote100 website and strategize about how to best communicate with faculty in the fall since undergraduates would not be returning to campus in the fall. A message about voting engagement and accommodation was sent to faculty by the Dean of the College, they were essential in imbedding voting registration links for all graduate and undergraduate students in the required academic-year check in, and helped craft messages to department chairs and representatives on how they could support our voting efforts. The Faculty Advisory Committee drafted a letter sent to all undergraduate and graduate students days before the election so that our community would have the proper perspective on when we could reasonably expect election results to be finalized.

The enthusiastic engagement from the Faculty Advisory Committee carried over to President Chris Eisgruber as well. President Eisgruber referenced the voting engagement work of Vote100 in a number of fora. He recorded a video that was sent to all students and was widely distributed over University communication channels including Princeton Alumni, prospective students via Admission social media accounts, and faculty and staff. He invited Vote100 representatives to present to the Academic and Administrative Advisors Group (AAMG) a body of approximately 400 of the most senior academic and administrative leaders on campus. His initial blog post spotlights the Vote100 program. The Vote100 student leaders have been invited to present their work to the Student Life Committee of the Board of Trustees.

Lastly, this Fall we formally invited graduate students to participate in the leadership of Vote100. We appointed two graduate student coordinators to connect our work to the graduate student population at Princeton. We also formalized a relationship with the Graduate Student Government so we could more efficiently distribute voter engagement information to their respective residential communities. This was particularly relevant to us this year as graduate students were the only students, save approximately 200 undergraduates living in our dormitories on campus this fall.



Data Analysis from Past Years

Vote100 relied on Tufts University's National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) to provide data on student voting patterns at Princeton. NSLVE data was available for four previous election years: 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018.

One of the most striking pieces of information was that only 10.5% of eligible Princeton undergraduates voted in 2014. Princetonians voted at roughly half the rate of college students as a whole, and at about a third of the rate of all eligible voters. "10.5%" was used as a watchword, in Vote100's messaging, a symbol of how far Princeton had yet to go and how easy it would be to improve on 2014's statistics.

The NSLVE data also allowed Vote100 to target messaging to groups which had particularly low turnout. NSLVE collected data on voting rates by major/course of study, and although their list of majors did not match perfectly with the concentrations offered by Princeton, some patterns still stood out. Students studying STEM subjects – mathematics, statistics, biology, and computer science, among others – voted at much lower rates than students in humanities and social science departments. Although Princeton's BSE concentrations do not fully encompass STEM studies at the University, Vote100 attempted to reach out specifically to BSE departments and related organizations.

The most recent data from 2018 indicate that Princeton's voting rate has improved somewhat. 43.6% of eligible Princeton undergraduates voted in the last midterm elections. We expect that Vote100's efforts, coupled with the unique circumstances of the upcoming election, will significantly increase turnout within the student body.

Voter Education

Vote100 focused its efforts on ensuring that members of the Princeton community were supplied with a continuous stream of accurate, helpful information, especially because of the uncertainty surrounding voting amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Vote100 website was designed to be a central hub for voting-related information, with helpful guidance regardless of where and how students choose to vote. Fellows published and updated a set of [frequently asked questions](#); they also wrote and published news articles about voting as a Princeton student and about the University's efforts to encourage turnout.

As policies differ greatly from state to state, members of the team compiled external resources that students could use to answer questions specific to their region. TurboVote proved essential to this effort, because once students signed up for the service it automatically notified them of changes in their state's election process and reminded them of upcoming deadlines.

Vote100 paid special attention to the incoming first-years. With the confusion and uncertainty of having their first semester off-campus, Vote100 devoted its resources to ensuring that first-years knew how essential voting is to being a Princetonian. A team of summer fellows created an online module for first-years to complete prior to their matriculation. The final product included a video of alumni and local politicians sharing why they vote as well as an introduction to Vote100 and TurboVote. The team also designed quizzes for matriculating students to take after completing the module. Hoping to engage first-years beyond orientation, they created an RCA toolkit with plans for a Vote100-themed study break.

Outreach



Vote100 pursued two parallel strategies for conducting voter outreach: institutional engagement and personal interaction. Outreach began on the institutional level. Vote100 fellows contacted the leaders of every undergraduate student group recognized by ODUS – more than 350 in total – and asked that they forward Vote100’s messaging to the members of their group, including unique TurboVote referral links. The referral links allowed Vote100 management to track participation in real time as students registered with TurboVote. Vote100 also partnered with non-student organizations, including residential colleges, eating clubs, and the Office of Religious Life to disseminate Vote100 messaging. The goal of this stage of outreach was to permeate the traditional channels of campus communication with voting-related information.

Toward the second half of the summer, Vote100 transitioned to individual outreach. The 26 undergraduate fellows spent weeks contacting every single undergraduate. Every student received a personalized message from a Vote100 Fellow encouraging them to sign the Vote100 pledge, to register for TurboVote, and to vote. Through this one-on-one interaction, Vote100 fellows were able to answer questions and offer guidance. Individual outreach also showed students that their peers were civically engaged and that Vote100 was run by and for students. Between institutional and individual outreach, Vote100 can guarantee that every Princeton undergraduate received at least one message (but more likely several) about voting.

Fall Strategy

Vote100 efforts included 3 phases:

1. Registration
2. Education
3. Ballot Turnout

Ambassadors and State Directors and the Faculty Advisory Committee

Vote100 recruited 130 members of the student body as Ambassadors to serve as liaisons between Vote100 and the wider Princeton community. These students help to register students to vote, assist in planning events, and distribute Vote100 materials to their prospective networks. The 2024 Voting Council provided a space for first year students to connect with other students interested in voter and civic engagement and develop programming opportunities for members of their class.

Vote100 also brought on 23 State Directors who volunteered to provide timely updates to other students in their state with specific and accurate voter and election information. The Faculty Advisory Committee offers advice and counsel to the Vote100 team to ensure that our work has the strongest pedagogical foundation. They help connect our campus efforts to larger national and international research and trends in voter engagement. The Committee provided key election recommendations for students to move to only voting at a drop box location or in person once mailing in ballots wasn’t an option.

Voter Registration and Education

Vote100 values informed student voters and made it a goal to provide current and easy to use resources to students. TurboVote sent students reminders and up to date information about election rules in their state, and this was helpful given changing state rules around the pandemic. The platform is integrated into TigerHub, Blackboard, and Canvas. Vote100 maintained a sustained communication and messaging with student voters on reliable information for when and where to vote. The student body received newsletters and engaged with Vote100 via the website, social media, and direct student contact with Voting Office Hours. They were also encouraged to check their voter status prior to state specific registration deadlines.

Outreach and Developing Campus Culture around Voting



We presented our work and effort to various campus stakeholders like administrators and the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) to encourage collaboration with civic and voter engagement efforts. The Presidential Debate Preview: A Faculty Conversation featured star Faculty Fellows and the Vice President for Communications and Public Affairs Brent Colburn to discuss the presidential debates and candidates. Another faculty discussion that featured Vote100 Fellows was the Politics & Polls livestream with Vote100 Faculty Fellows Samuel Wang and Julian Zelizer. Vote100 also sponsored events that emphasized emphasis on down ballot issues and local elections with campus partners like the Pace Center. These partnerships included a discussion with the Pace Council for Civic Values (PCCV) on the importance of participating in local and state elections. Outreach also included events with the Athletics Department and Campus Recreation. Vote100 presented during a Lunch & Learn with various coaches and staff within Athletics and hosted a Trivia Night with voter-themed questions in collaboration with Campus Rec.

Voter Turnout

Princeton ODUS and Vote100 were very active with communications to ensure that our voting messages reached the widest possible audience. The Vote100 administrative team met weekly with the Office of Communications at Princeton to align Vote100 messages with other communication being sent to the University community. A recent example of this partnership is the Vote100 Profile story on the University homepage.

As we knew that our campus would be particularly dependent on vote by mail (New Jersey transitioned to vote by mail in response to the pandemic), we worked with Fellows and our 130 Undergraduate Ambassadors to sponsor Tiger Ballot Day (10/10/20) with National Voter Education Week. As part of our social media outreach, we enlisted a number of alumni, faculty, and students to create content to encourage students to vote by mail and/or make a concrete voting plan. We enlisted the help of alumni currently holding elected office at the state or federal level, including former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (TN-R).

With Voting Power Hours, students had the opportunity to learn about the power of reaching out to their friends and family about voting, all while interacting with special guests including Selena Gomez, Jessica Chastain, John David Washington, Dave Matthews, Tessa Thompson, Damien Chazelle, Emma Stone, John Chu, and Ramy Youssef. The Voting Power Hours were an initiative of Princeton alumni and staff in partnership with colleagues from ALL IN Democracy Challenge and Vote for Astra. All five Voting Power Hours were sponsored and streamed on campus sites by the Undergraduate Student Government. We reached out to a number of colleges and universities across the country to enlist support in this program; outreach included every college in Arizona, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, all Ivy League+ schools, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and targeted community colleges across the nation. Our colleagues at Outvote report that the campaign yielded 30,000 texts to friends and family encouraging people to vote.

Vote100 partnered with the Department of Athletics to organize public voter registration drives/campaigns throughout the fall. Working closely with the Athletic Department administration, teams were encouraged to register all team members and actively promote voter registration online. The following teams achieved 100% registration: Men's and Women's Soccer, Men's and Women's Volleyball, Men's and Women's Basketball, Men's and Women's Water Polo, Women's Golf, Women's Lacrosse, Field Hockey, Women's Ice Hockey, Men's Heavyweight Rowing, Women's Swimming and Diving, and Softball. Additionally, teams such as Princeton Football made promotional videos for distribution through social media channels. We worked with Athletics Marketing to develop voter engagement materials which were in turn used by the entire Princeton community.

The 2020 NJ Ballot Bowl was a non-partisan competition between New Jersey colleges and universities sponsored by the NJ Secretary of State. A State Director oversaw the reporting of weekly voter registration data. Princeton University came in



second place. Finally, Vote100 celebrated as a community with the Election Watch Party co-sponsored with Whig-Clio and the USG Senate.

Beyond 2020

Vote100 will provide spaces for processing the election outcome for students. The Election Meditation Series will offer mindfulness meditation sessions in collaboration with the Office of Religious Life for those experiencing stress around the election season. Processing Circles will feature collaborations with the Center for Jewish Life the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, the LGBT Center the Women*s Center, the Carl A. Fields Center, and Rutgers Student Affairs. “Beyond the 2020 November Election: A Panel Discussion on the Importance of Voting and Organizing at the Local Level” featured alumni from state and local government to speak to students about how to continue momentum after the 2020 Election. Vote100 is helping sponsor a lecture featuring Professors Stephens-Dougan of Princeton, Ashley Jardina of Duke, and Davin Phoenix of University of California-Irvine to discuss “Group Attitudes, Identities, and U.S. Politics” on November 24th.

Inclusion of International, Undocumented, and Disenfranchised Populations

We invite and encourage those in our community who are not eligible to cast a ballot in US elections to commit to cast a ballot in every election anywhere they are eligible, to work with their peers to foster an energized and engaged voting environment on campus, or to take on personally meaningful civic issues in a purposeful way. Our pledge model encourages this type of engagement to foster an inclusive environment around civic and voter engagement.

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Vote100’s work is just beginning. Although the 2020 election is upon us, and we are confident that more Princetonians than ever will make themselves heard at the polls, there is more that can be done. Vote100 must ensure that voting is always at the forefront of campus discussions and activism. We will also work to expand messaging and outreach to students who are ineligible to vote – whether because they are too young or because they are not US citizens – to remind them of the myriad other ways in which they can participate in public discourse. But before we can hope to achieve 100% participation in elections, we need to change Princeton’s campus culture. Vote100 must work with every campus institution, academic and non-academic, to remind students of their civic duty and to provide any assistance they require to fulfil it. Active contribution to the democratic process should be the rule, not the exception. In the future, we hope to work with the entire Princeton community – students, faculty, and staff – to make voting a rite of passage for each and every Princetonian.

Recommendations:

- Review the data from the 2020 campaign; this is the most extensive voting initiative at Princeton. The challenges of being away from campus proved challenging, but we did have consistently high engagement with students virtually.
- Look for opportunities to imbed the new initiatives approved for this year as ongoing initiatives. For example, a voter education presentation should be included in undergraduate Orientation going forward. We will pursue ongoing placement of voter registration links in key sites such as the Academic Year Check-In and TigerHub.
- Identify ways in which we can help New Jersey become a more voter-friendly state.
- Work with Vote100 students on presenting a referendum before the Undergraduate Student Government to make election day a University holiday.



- Publish, as far in advance as possible, whether courses that meet on Election Day are being held at a specific time, and whether or not attendance is required
- Consider pre-recording or rescheduling lectures, precepts, and labs that fall on Election Day so that students may attend classes on their own time or make them up during Reading Period
- Pledge to change any deadlines for assignments that fall on Election Day and to avoid scheduling any tests or assessments on Election Day
- Forgive, to the extent practicable, student absences or lateness due to voting