

PURDUEVOTES COALITION ALL-IN FOR DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE

VOTER ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN



Prepared by Melissa Gruver

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purdue University's Voter Engagement Action Plan was created by members of the PurdueVotes Coalition. After reviewing previous years' data related to registration and voting history at Purdue University's West Lafayette campus, leaders in the campus community committed to moving the world forward through civic engagement in the 2018 mid-term election cycle. This document serves two main purposes: to discuss the West Lafayette campus climate related to voting using NSLVE data and to highlight strategies towards improving that climate.

The PurdueVotes Coalition developed this plan in the Spring of 2018, with the intention to implement strategies during the Fall 2018 semester. Through a coordinated effort involving Civic Engagement & Leadership Development, University Residences, Student Activities and Organizations, Student Success, Fraternity, Sorority and Cooperative Life, and a number of academic departments, this plan seeks to increase voter registration, education, and participation. It utilizes a mixed methods approach, with on-line and in-person activities, resources, and engagement opportunities. The success of the plan will be measured by reviewing NSLVE data following the November 2018 elections.

LEADERSHIP

Purdue University President, Mitch Daniels, formally joined the Big Ten Challenge in the fall of 2017. With this commitment, a coalition of stakeholders across campus was formed to prepare an action plan for the 2018 mid-term election cycle.

Jointly chaired by Melissa Gruver, Associate Director of Civic Engagement & Leadership Development, and Susan Williams, Director of Government Relations for Purdue University, the PurdueVotes Coalition is comprised of staff, undergraduate, and graduate students invested in voter registration, education, and participation. The Coalition meets monthly to review previous NSLVE data, determine goals for All In and Big Ten Challenges, and strategies to register faculty, staff, and students to vote. Additionally, members brainstorm creative tactics to increase overall engagement in the democratic process- from information gathering to casting ballots on Election Day.

Melissa Gruver	Co-Chair	Civic Engagement & Leadership
Susan Williams	Co-Chair	Government Relations
Heather Beasley	Staff Member	Student Activities and Organizations and Krach Leadership Center
Ben Sasin	Undergraduate Member	Purdue Student Government
Patrick Fedick	Graduate Student	Purdue Graduate Student Government
Jasmine Edison	Undergraduate Member	Boilers In Action
Dhruv Bhargava	Undergraduate Member	Campus Freedom Alliance
Viviana Tsangaropoulos	Undergraduate Member	College Democrats
Brittany Barnes	Staff Member	Fraternity, Sorority and Cooperative Life
Nicki Rowlett	Staff Member	Fraternity, Sorority and Cooperative Life
Pablo Balcazar	Undergraduate Member	Purdue Immigrant Allies
Gordon Reed	Undergraduate Member	Alpha Phi Omega

Additional community partners include the following:

City of West Lafayette	City of Lafayette
League of Women Voters	The Purdue Exponent
The Journal and Courier	Indiana Campus Compact

COMMITMENT

Purdue University is committed to civic and democratic engagement of students. The curriculum and co-curriculum serve to highlight and uphold this as a value of the institution, and works to infuse experiences and learning opportunities with it. Measured formally through course, program, and department outcomes and evaluations, and informally through anecdotal encounters with faculty and staff, Purdue University is highly committed to cultivating informed and engaged agents of change.

The division of Student Life makes this apparent in two of its major principles: Student Learning and Leadership Development. Additionally, the Purdue Code of Ethics details the aspirations the institution has for its members:

"At Purdue, integrity is indispensable to our mission. We act with honesty and adhere to the highest standards of moral and ethical values and principles through our personal and professional behavior. We demonstrate our understanding of these values and principles and uphold them in every action and decision. Trust and trustworthiness go hand in hand with how we conduct ourselves, as we sustain a culture that is based upon ethical conduct. We expect our actions to be consistent with our words, and our words to be consistent with our intentions. **We accept our responsibilities, share leadership in a democratic spirit, and subject ourselves to the highest standards of public trust. We hold ourselves accountable for our words and our actions.**

We champion freedom of expression. To ensure our integrity, we safeguard academic freedom, open inquiry, and debate in the best interests of education, enrichment, and our personal and professional development. We embrace human and intellectual diversity and inclusiveness. We uphold the highest standards of fairness, act as responsible citizens, respect equality and the rights of others, and treat all individuals with dignity." (http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/about/integrity_statement.html; added emphasis)

Civic Engagement & Leadership Development, a standalone department in the division of Student Life, has cultivated explicit learning outcomes addressed through the work of the PurdueVotes Coalition:

"Students who participate in the programs, courses, and initiatives offered by Civic Engagement & Leadership Development will ...

3. demonstrate how one's social identities intersect with the practice of leadership and civic engagement behaviors
4. analyze critical societal issues and community needs in the context of community assets
5. describe the connection between their academic discipline and vocation to the leadership process and social responsibility"

These outcomes are met through a variety of curricular offerings including, but not limited to: multiple sections of Foundations of Leadership and Leadership for Social Change in partnership with the College of Education, which count towards general education requirements for students; the Boiler Serves: Community Engagement Interest Floor; a First-Year Leadership

Series, specifically for new Purdue Students; and a Women's Leadership in a Global Context Study Abroad experience. The department also sponsors programs such as Elect Her; Community Organizing Institute; and the Campus-Community (C2) Forum dedicated to civic engagement in all levels of the democratic process.

The aims and outcomes outlined here are all available on Purdue's official web presences, allowing those within and outside the institution access at any time. Additionally, the Division of Student Life hosts division-wide meetings, always beginning with a review of the principles that should guide the work of staff in the area. Civic Engagement & Leadership Development is highlighted as a premier area within the division for the work they do to further service, citizenship, and participation in the democratic process as the local, state, and national level. Specifically, the department's commitment to bridging town and gown relations, by taking the work off campus and into the streets of Greater Lafayette, does more to communicate the institution's commitment to developing civically minded students, than the static web presence.

LANDSCAPE

2014 NSLVE Data

During mid-term elections the National Student of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data indicates a drop voter registration (58.7% registration rate in 2014 midterm) and participation (9% voting rate in 2014) than in Presidential elections (69.3% registration rate and 37% voting rate in 2012). There is a small dip in the national rate during the 2014 mid-term election, with a 19.2% voting rate among public research institutions, so the lower number is not unexpected. However, the large departure from the average of peer institutions is concerning.

Students aged 18-21, the largest demographic of students at Purdue in 2014 midterm election, only had a voting rate of 4.8% compared to 27.2% two years earlier. Only 6.0% of undergraduate and 11.4% of graduate students voted in the 2014 election. Of those that voted, the three lowest racial demographics were:

- Asian 1.6%
- Hispanic 5.8%
- Black 7.2%

These data indicate a rift in participation in these communities during the 2014 mid-terms, when Purdue boasts a significant Asian student presence. The voting rates among Hispanic and Black voters in 2012 was higher (25.4% and 38.6% respectively), but the Asian rate was still below ten percent at 7.4%. An encouraging trend in the 2014 data indicates parity among men and women voters, where men were outvoted by women in 2012 by 6%.

STEM majors, specifically those in Computer and Information and Library Sciences (5.3%) and Biological and Biomedical Sciences (5.2%) were among the lowest voter rates in 2014. Purdue has large enrollments in these areas, making them key indicators of success for the PurdueVotes Coalition.

2016 NSLVE Data

The NSLVE indicates civic engagement is higher at Purdue during Presidential election years (47.9% voting rate in 2016), and near the average for all public research institutions (51.9% voting rate). This data indicates that it is possible to close the gap in voting rates with peer institutions that existed in 2014.

Voter rates increased across all demographic indicators in 2016. However, graduate students were outvoted by their undergraduate peers (33.7% compared to 37.9%), a reversal from the 2014 mid-term election data. When considering age groups, the 18-21 demographic exceeded their 22-24 and 25-29 peers, in a near 10% increase from 2012. This indicates a shift the PurdueVotes Coalition hopes to capitalize on for the 2018 mid-terms.

Hispanic (36.7%), Black (41.6%), and Asian (14.8%) voters were underrepresented at the Purdue polls in 2016. Nearly 15% of student enrollment at Purdue consisted of Asian, Hispanic, and Black students, demonstrating a need for engagement around voter registration and participation.

Computer and Information Science majors were one of three disciplines with less than 30% voting rate in 2016 at 28.4%; the other two areas of study included Mathematics and Statistics

(27.1%) and Physical Sciences (30.7%). These areas comprise slightly more than 10% of Purdue's total enrollment in 2016, another large population to target with 2018 mid-term election efforts.

Resources and Barriers

The institution funds the Civic Engagement & Leadership Development department on campus, committed to voter engagement and education. The staff create meaningful programming addressing the importance of democratic engagement as citizens of the United States, specifically at the local level. Signature programs in this area include ElectHer and the Women in Leadership Institute, hosted with support of AAUW and the Indiana National Guard; Community Organizing Institute; and the Campus-Community (C2) Forum in partnership with the Indiana Campus Compact.

Civic Engagement & Leadership Development also take the lead with curricular offerings, teaching multiple sections of Foundations of Leadership and Leadership for Social Change in partnership with the College of Education. Melding curricular studies with community, the Boiler Serves: Community Engagement Interest Floor "offers a year-long guided experience for students as they connect deeply with the surrounding Greater Lafayette community." Both of these courses satisfy general education credits for Purdue University students. The department also hosts a First-Year Leadership Series, specifically for new Purdue Students, and a Women's Leadership in a Global Context Study Abroad experience.

Purdue University also hosts a number of student organizations tied to specific political parties and ideological sets. These groups host campus events such as debates, watch parties, workshops, and informational sessions, creating peer-to-peer political discourse. The America Association of University Women (AAUW) chapter, College Democrats, College Republicans, Democratic Socialists, and Campus Freedom Alliance stand out as active and engaged groups doing the work on campus.

Some resources already exist to continue building momentum towards the Coalition's goals. These include button makers, access to printing and tech, and a dedicated office space to house all materials necessary for success. The addition of a second polling place closer to the residential side of campus would benefit the overall voting rate of the campus, as it would create closer proximity to students voting for the first time. Additionally, the use of Turbo Vote or a similar software platform would allow the PurdueVotes Coalition to send targeted text and email reminders to students related to voter registration deadlines, early voting dates and locations, and Election Day polling locations on campus.

Barriers exist related to our current resources and those identified as important to the success of the PurdueVotes Coalition. The primary challenge is financial; increased financial assets would allow access to the software platform and other expanded resources. Partnership is key, and the Coalition recognizes that University Residences, Boiler Gold Rush, and our Campus Centers have not directly been represented until recently. Increased outreach to campus and community stakeholders, in conjunction with the pursuit of grant opportunities, could create inroads to overcome these barriers.

GOALS

The PurdueVotes Coalition crafted the following goals after careful review of the 2012, 2014, and 2016 NSLVE data for the West Lafayette campus, with a focus on the 2014 mid-term data. Accomplishing these would likely impact the voting- and larger civic engagement- landscape at Purdue University. An increased number of faculty, staff, and students registered and voting on campus would meet the charges of Student Life and Civic Engagement & Leadership Development, inspiring a lifetime commitment to the democratic ideals of our nation. Individuals will develop the ability to critique platforms and proposed legislation, another ideal expressed in Purdue's Code of Ethics. While lofty, the Coalition members strongly believe that all metrics are attainable by the end of 2018.

- Increase Voter Registration among the following populations in the 2018 election:
 - Overall students: 85% registered to vote
 - Increase the voting rate of registered students from 15.8% (2014) to 30% in 2018
 - Work collaboratively with the College of Liberal Arts and College of Computer Science to register students in pre-requisite first-year classes.
- Increase voter participation among the following populations in the 2018 election:
 - Overall undergraduates: reach the 2014 national average for public research institutions (19% voting rate)
 - Graduate Students: increase the mid-term voting rate to 20%
 - Students of color:
 - Black and African American: increase the mid-term voting rate to 25%
 - Latinx: increase the mid-term voting rate to 20%
 - Asian and Asian American: increase the mid-term voting rate to 10%
- Enhance and provide increased access to voter education materials
 - Have voter guides produced and distributed to each residence hall floor by the end of 2018
 - Host tabling at 5 major university events in the fall semester, including Boiler Bridge Bash, Boiler Gold Rush, and Meet the Greeks and Cooperatives

STRATEGY

- Voter Registration
 - Door to door canvassing registration through joint efforts by University Residences and Boilers in Action
 - Registration days
 - Implement a core voter registration team to have presence at campus events during the Spring and Fall 2018 semester
 - Participate in National Voter Registration day through student-targeted email
 - Create and deploy Voter registration toolkits to students, student organizations, and departments requesting them until the voter registration deadline
 - Sponsor voter registration at the following events and locations:
 - Boiler Bridge Bash
 - Cultural Centers
 - Civic Engagement & Leadership Development
 - Schleman Hall
 - Purdue Memorial Union and Stewart Center
 - Six (6) Campus-wide Days of Service
 - Dining Courts
 - Engineering Mall
 - Memorial Mall
- Voter Education
 - Create a student voter registration guide in collaboration with Indiana Campus Compact
 - Host Debate Watch and Discuss gatherings throughout the Fall 2018 semester
 - Provide sample ballots at event and through PurdueVotes Coalition web presence
 - RA “program in a box” to host their own registration and education party as a floor program. This meets their Civic Engagement programming requirement.
 - Create and promote videos and Frequently Asked Questions sheets for student use and distribution
 - Partner with Purdue’s Orientation program, Boiler Gold Rush, to enhance the political advocacy session with a renewed focus on civic engagement through voting
- Voter Participation
 - Host an election party as votes are tallied on November 8, 2018
 - Establish a second voting location near the Residential side of the West Lafayette Campus

REPORTING

This action plan will be primarily used by members of the PurdueVotes Coalition and community partners. Internally, it will guide and shape our work over the coming year, and will be distributed to representatives present at the PurdueVotes Coalition monthly meetings, resuming in August 2018. However, we recognize the benefit of sharing portions of the plan with the public. Sections of the goals and strategy section will be made available on the Civic Engagement & Leadership Development website as well as any voter registration platform used to register individuals to vote.

NSLVE data points will also be shared only as they relate to our goals and objections, further demonstrating the need for registration, education, and participation from the Purdue University community. Points discussed in the Landscape portion of this document will be used in a narrative form, as grounding framework for participating in the All-In for Democracy Challenge. Data not included in this report will not be publicly shared.

EVALUATION

The PurdueVotes Coalition will assess and evaluate its successful completion of the stated goals by reviewing the NSLVE data available for Purdue's West Lafayette campus during the summer of 2019. While we would count any increase in registration and participation a success, we are most interested in comparing our 2014 and 2018 mid-term datasets. We will also note and forecast how changes in these rates may or may not hold steady for the 2020 election-cycle. These data points will be of interest to the PurdueVotes Coalition, Purdue Government Relations, Student Life, and the Office of the President. Additionally, the results of the Coalition's efforts will be shared as part of the Big Ten Challenge with Purdue's peer institutions. Some of the results will also be shared in a more public form once the NSLVE comparative data becomes available in the summer of 2019. Likely, this will be hosted on the Provost's website along with voter registration information.

Voter education will be evaluated through pre and post assessment during education events. These will be administered by the facilitator(s) of the educational events, and designed to seamlessly integrate into the program. Additionally data collection may take the form of post-election surveys for students who registered to vote on campus, asking about where and how they were educated on candidates, ballot measures, and voting process.

By evaluating the efforts of the PurdueVotes Coalition, the institution can make better informed decisions about when and in what matter to connect students with the learning outcomes defined in the landscape section of this document. Stakeholders can adjust programming to better fit the needs of the students on the West Lafayette campus.