

Stetson University

Voter Friendly Campus Application

February 2022

Prepared by: Victoria Ramón '24, Civic Fellow (student)

Kevin Winchell, Associate Director of Community Engagement

In 500 to 1000 words, summarize your institution's current Civic learning and Democratic Engagement work.

Stetson University's political engagement work occurs through both non-partisan and partisan organizations. Stetson Votes is a nonpartisan student-led and faculty supported organization that operates under Stetson University's Center for Community Engagement. The goals that Stetson Votes hope to achieve fall under four categories: Voter Registration, Voter Education, Voter Turnout, and Voter Activism.

Voter Registration:

One goal that Stetson Votes has set out to do is register all the eligible students that have an on-campus address. In our experience we have determined that students who register to vote with their on-campus address have a 23.7% higher turnout in elections, this is because registering with an on-campus address decreases the geographic barriers to voting. Moreover, registering students with their on-campus address strengthens the argument to our county Supervisor of Elections office that our campus should be designated as its own voting precinct. This argument is also supported by the fact that Stetson University is located along the I-4 corridor in Central Florida, and by establishing the campus as its own precinct would make it a target for state and national political campaigns.

Stetson Votes has obtained every eligible undergraduate student's name, birthday, address, and email address (this data was obtained through the Center for Community Engagement, which has access to our student information database). With this information we can target groups of students that need to be registered and participate in the events that pertain to these groups, such as First-Year orientation. We will also track which students have been registered and which have not been so that we can reach out to students that we might have missed at the events mentioned earlier. We can micro-target students and send them calls to action so that they can get registered to vote.

Voter Education:

Stetson Votes plans to hold events throughout the semesters of Spring 2022 and Fall 2022 that are aimed to educate our students on the issues that are current and on the ballot. We will host panels and lectures led by professors and experts that are knowledgeable about the subject that we are looking to discuss. We will also host debate watch parties when the time comes so that students can watch the debate and stay informed as they formulate their opinion. Stetson Votes will also plan a voter registration party so that students can register to vote and educate students on why it is beneficial to register to vote with their Stetson University address and how they can vote (voting in person on election day, early voting, and voting by mail). We will also print out voting checklists and sample ballots so that students know what they need to bring with them to the polls and what the ballot might look like.

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Voter Turnout:

Stetson Votes pushes voting by mail as research has indicated that individuals who vote by mail have a 20-30% higher chance of voting. Stetson votes also organizes transportation to the polls on election day. In the past, this has been very effective in getting our students to the polls and active voting. We also ask that students have a voting plan so that they are thinking about the election in the months leading up to the election.

In the past Stetson Votes has compiled a database of all eligible undergraduate students. This database has helped us track the students that are registered to vote, whether they have enrolled in vote by mail through the state of Florida, how likely they are to vote based on the events we sponsor on campus and their participation in elections on campus, such as the Student Government Association (SGA) Elections. This database that also includes students' academic and on campus involvement allows us to message and market better. We create a message that meets students where they are in the voter activation/turnout sequence. Creating this message helps us maximize the probability that they will listen to our objective. Essentially, we run our campus like a political campaign would with voter databases and communication plans. Moreover, this data will help us understand the programming that have the highest return on investment for our students, starting their habits of voting now and leading them to continue voting in the future.

To maximize our outreach, we enlist the help of the politically affiliated organizations on campus such as Stetson College Democrats, Stetson College Republicans and Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). We have set up a liaison to work with Stetson Votes, this liaison receives the names of students who chose to register with a party, the political organization then tries to encourage the student to vote. This approach allows for a collaboration between student organization and gives students a place to be with other students that think similarly.

Voter Activism:

As Stetson Votes we understand that voting is simply not enough to make change in the political sphere. Therefore, we try to encourage our students to take an active role in shaping the DeLand community through politics. We do that through regular posts on our Instagram that advertise volunteer opportunities with political organizations and campaigns. This information will also be advertised by partisan clubs on campus as well as on the Stetson Votes website. We hope that the students who want to go into this field can relate to job opportunities and graduate school opportunities so that they can continue in engaging with meaningful work related to voting.

List the top three things you'd like for your institution to gain and/or learn by being a part of the Voter Friendly Campus designation process?

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1. Grant/funding opportunities available to fund our work
2. Evidence-based college student voter registration and get out to vote best-practices
3. Additional awards/recognition that can be applied for