



Campus Vote Project Action Plan 2022

Executive Summary

Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) is a selective admission Hispanic Serving Institution located on the border between Mexico and the United States, with an enrollment of over 8,000 students. We are, in fact, the four-year institution with the highest percentage Hispanic enrollment (92.5%) in the United States. The 2019-2020 student body includes 54.2% first-generation students, 61% female, and 81% of our students are Pell-Grant Recipients. While our TAMIU four-year graduation is 25% and our 6-year graduation rate is 47%, our first-year persistence rate is 79%: the highest of the regional institutions in the Texas A&M System. The University delivers over 80 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs.

Developed by our ALL-IN Taskforce members, this Campus Plan outlines our university's voter education, registration and turnout efforts throughout the Fall 2021, Spring 2021, and Fall 2022 academic semesters. It is also meant to serve as a guide that provides structure for our campus partners and helps track our progress as an institution. With TAMIU's fourth and fifth year in participation of democratic engagement opportunities, campus plans such as this one offer an opportunity to track yearly progress and add revisions to established strategies. It covers all of the democratic engagement opportunities that will be hosted on campus for students and members of the community.

TAMIU's Mission aligns extremely well with the Campus Votes Project, as our institution aims to "prepare students for leadership roles in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse state, national, and global society," as we strive to improve "the quality of lives for citizens of the border region, the State of Texas, and national and international communities." A collaboration between universities and organizations like the Campus Vote Project is vital for the removal of barriers that deter our young adults to participate in our democracy. Clearly, a hosting and promotion of democratic engagement opportunities through this plan is essential for the sustainment of an informed citizenry who engages in political action, specifically for young Hispanics, who have been historically underrepresented at the national level.

Leadership

Lead: Dr. Nicholas Hudson, Director of the Office of Student Orientation, Leadership, and Engagement, nicholashudson@tamiu.edu, (956) 326-2283, Dr. Daniel de La Miyar, Assistant

Professional, University College

Engage: Initial ALL IN Task Force co-chairs and members have been meeting throughout the Fall Semester. Because of the current situation, our Task Force Meetings have been/will be held virtually. Our 2021-2022 TAMIU All-In Democracy Task Force will consist of students, faculty and staff, and administration.

1. Dr. Daniel De la Miyar, Co-Chair, UC
2. Dr. Nicholas Hudson, Co-Chair, Student Success
3. Consuelo Guzman, Student Success
4. Diego Collazo, Student Success
5. Scheiby Gonzalez Fisher, Student Success
6. Glenn Manning, Student Success
7. Christine Rojas, PRMIS
8. Jake Hudspeth, Athletics
9. Lilia P. Cantú, UC
10. Dr. Haley Kazen, UC
11. Dr. Irma Cantú, COAS
12. Dr. Jared Dmello, COAS
13. Dr. Nilda Garcia, COAS
14. Dr. Andrew Hazelton, COAS
15. Dr. Arthur Soto-Vasquez, COAS
16. ARSSB Rep
17. COED Rep
18. Isabela Barrientos, SGA PAC
19. Angel Olmos, SGA PAC
20. Ilse Rodriguez, Greek Council
21. Cord Hernandez, Greek Council
22. GA Rep
23. PASA Rep
24. PSA Rep
25. Krystel Castillo, MOVE Texas
26. PSA Rep
27. PSA Rep
28. Christian Ochoa, LULAC
29. Mayela Villarreal, College Democrats
30. Democracy Fellow – TBD
31. Democracy Fellow – Yulianna Laurencin

Purpose and Scope

There is a growing interest in the promotion of civic learning and democratic engagement among our students, faculty and staff. TAMIU administration has been committed to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. As such, the administration authorized the creation of the TAMIU All-In Democracy Task Force, charged with constant communication of voter engagement opportunities and initiatives has been displayed among our faculty and staff. This communication also extends to outside our campus as outside organizations have been notified about our initiatives in the past.

The TAMIU All-In Democracy Task Force meets monthly during the Fall 2021 semester and weekly during the Spring 2022 and Fall 2022 semesters to discuss voter registration plans and voter mobilization/turnout in a nonpartisan way to increase the democratic engagement of TAMIU students, faculty and staff. The meetings feature students, faculty and staff as we discuss our plans for the Fall 2022 election. We also assist in other democratic engagement activities, such as participation in Voter Education and Civil Discourse. With multiple representatives from individual university departments and student organizations, this Taskforce is resilient to changes in student organization/university department/taskforce leadership. Since all members are active in the decision-making processes of the Taskforce, transitions in any position (if required) should be smooth.

Commitment

Our University's administration has always been committed to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. Constant communication of voter engagement opportunities and initiatives has been displayed among our faculty and staff. This communication also extends to outside our campus as outside organizations have been notified about our initiatives in the past. There is a growing interest in the promotion of civic learning and democratic engagement among our students, faculty and staff. There is, however, room for improvement and growth.

Our taskforce's efforts throughout the academic year should cement democratic engagement into our university's culture. Changes are already being seen and felt. As a response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our democratic engagement have shifted to a hybrid approach virtual engagement in some of our university's most used platforms (even before the COVID-19 pandemic). For instance, democratic engagement has made its way to our new student and transfer student orientations. Our office website also promotes this taskforce's mission, goals, and efforts and provides interested individuals with informational resources. All student organization members and graduating students use a platform called TAMIU Trailblazers, where students are asked to sign up for reminders about upcoming elections and registration deadlines in the State of Texas. Trailblazers has also proved an effective tool to share "news" about our Taskforce's efforts and events. Even after the pandemic, these platforms will be constantly used by all of our Dustdevils.

Strategic Plan:

One of the ways this taskforce believes this growth will happen is through the implementation of this plan. This plan's events create enough attention that attracts students, professors, and community members and motivates them to be politically engaged. This can actually be seen in our university's social media pages and internet page, with different articles congratulating the successes of the democratic engagement efforts on our campus. The campus has also agreed to participate in the NSLVE's collection of data for a couple of years now. This is useful in tracking the progress and the success of different initiatives. Through the collaboration with professors, students are motivated to vote and remain informed of the voting process in the State of Texas. As a matter of fact, one of the components of this plan is to ask professors to dismiss classes early to give students enough time to vote.

Landscape

Students:

Our University recently surpassed the 8,000 students enrolled mark this past Fall semester. Texas A&M International University is the nation's largest Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with over 93% of the student population identifying as Hispanic/LatinX. A substantial amount of TAMIU's student population is first-generation and a percentage of our students are Pell-eligible. A very small percentage of our student population lives on campus (7.8%) which poses different problems for our democratic engagement efforts.

Using our NSLVE data from 2016 and 2018 sheds some light on the majors and individuals our taskforce has to focus on. First and foremost, the vast majority of our students vote during the early voting period. This is because our institution is fortunate enough to have its own early voting polling site on campus. In 2016, 67.3% of our registered students voted early. In 2018, 76% of our registered students voted early. In 2020, 77% of students voted early, an increase by 10% points. By far, our taskforce efforts should focus on promoting early voting on campus, as it's already the most popular form of voting. Interestingly enough, our NSLVE data shows nothing for our voting by mail numbers. This is something our taskforce will resolve by 1) promoting voting by mail and by 2) partnering up with TurboVote. This partnership will help our students register and vote by mail, an important step forward during this pandemic. The three majors that voted the least in 2020 were our Engineering and Engineering Technologies (43%), Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Humanities (43%), and Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fitness Studies (40%). In 2018, these majors were Foreign Languages, Literatures and Linguistics, and Engineering and Engineering Technologies and Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies. A focus on these students is a surefire way to increase democratic participation in our campus. Moreover, percentage-wise our older students vote more than our younger students. Quantity-wise, however, more younger students vote than older students. This is expected because of our university's demographics, but sheds light on where our taskforce should focus on this upcoming academic year.

Current Campus Efforts

Voter registration: Our institution's voter registration efforts have been significantly successful and popular among our students. It must be noted, however, that voter registration efforts have only been recently incorporated into our University's events in Fall 2018, after an invitation to our students to participate in the Texas Voting Summit. The attendance to this Summit encouraged our students, faculty, and staff to come together and create a task force (which has been in existence ever since) in charge of promoting voter registration on campus. This taskforce hosts voter registration drives around diverse locations on campus during National Voter Registration Day, different days throughout the Fall semester, and on the last day for voter registration in the State of Texas. Moreover, the Office of Student Orientation, Leadership, and Engagement has incorporated voter registration into TAMIU's New Student Orientation, effectively exposing the incoming freshmen class to our democratic engagement efforts. TAMIU has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MOVE Texas which includes providing MOVE Texas with Federal Work Study student employees to help register voters. This is part of our university-wide efforts to institutionalize voter registration efforts.

Voter education: The Political Action Committee of the Student Government Association hosts a variety of forums and debates during the election cycle so that our students are informed and educated on diverse local, state, and national candidates' platforms. The PAC also hosts a Constitution Day celebration open to all students. Some of our campus partners also host informational tables during the semester that our students can visit to remain informed of different political issues. A Volunteer Deputy Registrar training session is also hosted by this task force on campus. The majority of our trainees are students, but these training sessions are also open to members of the community. Given that this year is a primary season, the Student Government Association PAC will be hosting candidate forums and debates with various candidates for political office. Additionally, the SGA PAC will host workshops around the redistricting process and why students should care about that process. The Office of Student

Orientation, Leadership, and Engagement will be hosting numerous voter education forums, debates, and events of political nature throughout the academic year.

Voter access: Our institution is incredibly fortunate to have a polling site at our campus. By far, our early voting site on campus is the most popular when it comes to the amount of individuals that vote at it. Our regular polling site could definitely be benefitted by social media and grassroots promotion.

Campus climate: The student body at TAMIU is definitely becoming more interested in the bipartisan nature of politics. While our campus currently does not house organizations like Young Republicans, it does house organizations such as the Political Science Association, SGA's Political Action Committee, MOVE TX, and TAMIU College Democrats. These organizations have been responsible for hosting educational tables, hosting debates, and other events of political nature. Activism events, such as protests, are extremely rare. However, there has definitely been a growth in political discourse and debate among students. The Office of Student Orientation, Leadership, and Engagement has also been instrumental in TAMIU's democratic engagement efforts – hosting classes and programs revolving around democratic engagement and political participation in our campus and community.

Goals

Long-term goals

TAMIU's overall long-term goal is to provide students with the tools necessary in becoming lifelong active citizens and community leaders. While it would be unwise to put a timetable for long term goals, to move toward our goal of providing our students with said tools, TAMIU hopes to:

- Conduct voter registration for 100% of eligible students
- Institutionalize our democratic engagement initiatives, engraining them in our university's traditions and culture
 - Incorporating democratic engagement in faculty syllabi through the Student Government Association and Faculty Senate
- Institutionalize our task force
- Consistently strive towards obtaining designations from diverse organizations that establish our campus as a democratic campus
- Ensure TAMIU's democratic engagement efforts are student-led and incorporate our student organizations (in the past, representatives from MOVE, the League of Empowered Women, and the Political Science Association have led some of our democratic engagement efforts)
- Developing long-lasting connections with outside organizations to increase voter engagement outside of campus and in the community. Best known as "town and gown" relations, our institution strives to register non-college students (members of the community) and make TAMIU a symbol of democratic engagement in our community through ongoing MOU/partnership with MOVE Texas

Short term goals

TAMIU's short term goals are to take advantage of the established momentum our civic engagement efforts have garnered and to build on what we have learned. TAMIU's hopes to:

- Increase voter registration rate to 85%
- Study data from 2020 NSLVE Data to determine path forward and determine appropriate voter registration and turnout goals depending on majors
- Host voter registration drives at all signature events
- Institutionalize Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MOVE Texas to include work study students and work towards building comprehensive voter registration campaign plan for different university offices/departments
- Create a Scholarship & fundraise for Scholarship that is targeted towards students that are democratically engaged. (Be The Voice)

Our Strategy for 2022

A. Voter education:

1. Provide a presentation highlighting TAMIU's multiple democratic engagement efforts to all new Freshmen Students during our New Student Orientation Sessions throughout summer.
2. First-Year Seminar (UNIV 1201) – introduces students to key concepts and foundational knowledge regarding democratic engagement, such as voter registration and turnout.
3. First-Year Seminar Signature Course (UNIV 1302) – partnership with faculty to create signature courses that build on the key concepts introduced in UNIV 1201.
4. Student Government Association – provides a direct line of communication with students that promotes democratic engagement through peer-to-peer encouragement and provides accurate information on diverse issues
5. Greek Council – in alignment with the organizational founding missions of its individual members, the Greek Council hosts events related to democratic engagement and educates and encourages its members to be democratically engaged. Greek Council will also host various events related to democratic engagement during Hazing Prevention Week.
6. Encourage connections between civic-based campus events and voting, including promotion of civic opportunities with Campus Vote Project, Ask Every Student, Texas Voters Summit, MOVE Texas, etc.
7. Coordinate and host debates/forums for local and primary elections.
8. Incorporate democratic engagement and education to TAMIU's Signature Programs of Welcome Week, Welcome Back Week, and Spirit Week.
9. Provide unique opportunities to learn about democratic engagement – seminars, informational sessions, programs, speaker series, and other engagement opportunities.
10. Coordinate and host a Volunteer Deputy Registrar Class at TAMIU for students that will be registering others to vote. Set up of this class/session must be arranged with the Webb County Elections Office by the first week of school to give enough time to make any accommodations necessary.
11. Creation of a Voter's Guide detailing various races
12. Hosting of local city-council and Mayoral debates

B. Voter registration:

1. Provide a presentation highlighting TAMIU's multiple democratic engagement efforts to all new Freshmen Students during our New Student Orientation Sessions throughout summer. This presentation will also serve as means of

- registering all of our incoming freshmen class.
2. Celebrate National Voter Registration Days (Sept. 28, 2022):
- Register 100+ students during TAMIU's NVRD campus takeover.
 - Host (in partnership with MOVE and other TAMIU student organizations) multiple voter registration events during TAMIU's Signature Programs
 - Increased Spring 2022 voter registration efforts in anticipation of the Spring 2022 primaries
 - Increased Fall 2022 voter registration efforts to include 4 large scale voter registration efforts in coordination with the Student Government Association, Greek Association and MOVE Texas
 - Social Media Efforts – our campus, student organization partners, and students utilize social media to inform students and community members of democratic engagement opportunities through creation of videos, flyers, and screen savers.
 - Register 250+ students throughout each year in joint efforts with MOVE Texas

Reporting

TAMIU's taskforce will use several options for reporting our results and for attracting participants to our democratic engagement efforts:

- Utilizing our Campus Labs/Trailblazers platform program page to promote democratic engagement opportunities
- Maintenance of a "Democratic Engagement" tab on TAMIU SOLE's website that will cover voting resources, opportunities to get involved, our institution's campus plans and resources, links to register to vote
- Promote democratic engagement opportunities reminders via our University's newspaper (The Bridge)
- Use of digital signage on campus' desktops, computers, television screens, etc.
- Updates via University's and taskforce members social media pages (Facebook is by far the most popular among our students)
- Publishing of informational articles regarding our results on our University's internet page
- Use of mass email that can reach all students and all professors
- Use of mass text messaging system that reaches all students
- Attendance at events

Evaluation

The evaluation of our efforts is vital for progress and the implementation of new concepts. TAMIU's taskforce will use several methods to evaluate our progress:

- TAMIU will continue to use NSLVE data to develop voting goals and evaluate voter participation progress. NSLVE's comprehensiveness is incredibly useful in the identification of areas needing improvement. A student-led taskforce, in our opinion, helps in the addressing of these areas.
- Data collection for voter registration numbers are to be collected each time there is a tabling event or drive.
- Participation rates and program evaluations will be collected at each individual event
- All of this data will be discussed and addressed during our taskforce weekly meetings.