



Campus Vote Project: “Paws to the Polls” Action Plan 2024

Executive Summary

Texas A&M University-San Antonio (A&M-SA) is a contemporary university reflective of the diverse and heritage-rich community it serves. Founded as the first upper-division institution of higher education in South San Antonio, A&M-SA today is a comprehensive four-year university offering affordable, high-quality education.

Since becoming a standalone university and from fall 2009 to fall 2024, enrollment grew 215 percent. The University currently serves more than 8,000 students and has graduated more than 15,300 alumni. The student body is 65.7 percent female and 77 percent Hispanic, and approximately 73 percent of students are the first in their family to attend college.

Developed by our ALL-IN Taskforce members, this Campus Plan outlines our university’s voter education, registration and turnout efforts throughout the Fall 2024, Spring 2025, and Fall 2025 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.

Leadership

Lead: Clarissa Tejada, Director of Employer Relations and Community Outreach, Mays Center for Experiential Learning and Community Engagement, Clarissa.tejada@tamusa.edu, 210-784-1339

Professional, Student Affairs

Engage: ALL IN Task Force members have been meeting within Summer and Fall Semesters to build a calendar of various voter education and registration engagement points for campus community to engage in. Due to large size of group, this team has been broken into various subcommittees to manage scheduling and strategic planning for incoming municipal election cycle in Spring 2024. Our 2024 All-In Democracy Task Force will consist of community, students, faculty and staff, and administration.

Task Force

University Leadership:

Vice President for Student Affairs	Dr. Juan Guardia
Dean of Students and Associate Vice President	Dr. Zeak Naifeh
Associate Vice President & Executive Director, Mays Ctr.	Dr. Adriana Contreras
Director of Employer Relations and Community Outreach, Mays Ctr.	Clarissa Tejeda
Director of First-Year Experience	Jessica Reynolds
Assistant Director of First-Year Experience	Yaribel Caraveo
Director of Student Engagement	Gretchen Doenges
Director of Student Leadership	Tabitha Venezia
Director of Honors College	William Bush

Student Organization and Club Leadership:

Student Government Association (SGA), President	Serenity Gil
Student Government Association (SGA), Vice President	Janet Zulu
MOVE Texas, Student Chapter	Appointed representative
The Mesquite (Student Newspaper)	Appointed representative
Enlace (Student Magazine)	Appointed representative

Community-Based Partners:

Radical Registrars	Val Reiffert
Your Vote Texas	Michelle LoweSolis
League of Women Voters of San Antonio	Margaret R. Kanyusik
Equality Texas	Sofia Sepulveda
Jolt Initiative	Julio Navarro
NextGen America Climate Action	Natalie Garza
City of San Antonio City Council Constituent Services	La-Tieka Sims

Landscape

Originally established to provide for the historically underserved population of the South Side of San Antonio, the demographics of the university still reflect our initial student population. Texas A&M University-San Antonio is a Hispanic Serving Institution that self identifies as 70% Latino/a and 73% first generation college students. Over 81% of students receive some form of Financial Aid, and over one in six are military connected. It is a Purple Heart designated institution, recognized for the strength of its service toward veterans and military affiliated students. Recently our campus surpassed the 8,000 students enrolled mark this Fall 2024.

Using our NSLVE data from 2022 allowed our team to identify key areas of growth potential and focus for this upcoming election cycle. The data showed 67% of campus voters participated in early voting. This data point allowed our campus to advocate to the Bexar County Elections Department and Commissioners Office to ensure A&M-SA will be a polling site during the Early Voting timeline rather than just election day. We also received support from the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project in the form of both a letter and email of support to the Election Department asking for this on-campus polling site. In addition to

this finding, it was noted that the 18-21 age group was our lowest voter profile. This activated the team to focus efforts on new voter education and registration. From orientation to programming alignment with First-Year experience, we have been intentional about creating conversations and opportunities for students to learn what an informed, active voter looks like.

Commitment

Established as a standalone university in May 2009, Texas A&M University-San Antonio (A&M-SA) is the most recent addition to the eleven institutions of the Texas A&M University System. As a brand-new member of a prestigious network deeply entrenched in tradition and common values, A&M-SA is a university on a mission; a mission to not only rise to the basic needs and expectations of the greater San Antonio community today, but to grow to deeply understand and undertake the actions necessary to lead the population of Texas to a brilliant tomorrow. A commitment to audacious growth and high impact practices guides the university in its journey to become a national model of service, student success and community engagement.

The Mays Center for Experiential Learning & Community Engagement serves as a centralized department to lead civic engagement programming and conversations. The Mays Center is a professional development center for students and alumni which promote career building, civic engagement, and professional development. Since 2021, the Mays Center has created a student worker position, Democratic Engagement Student, which is dedicated to democratic engagement and leadership on campus. This position is dedicated to creating, implementing, and enforcing our developed action plan for this year and years to come.

Goals

Long-Term Goals:

- I. *Achieve Gold Campus status for Presidential Election for 2024*
 - a. Promote presence on campus, through strategic events and involvement with other student organizations.
 - b. Achieve 100% student voter registration
- II. *“Institutionalize” our civic engagement initiatives by developing civic engagement traditions/event:* that will be a part of our culture; institutionalizing a task force, and linking our work to institutional core learning objectives.
 - a. Creating a relationship with our professors that promote our democratic engagement events and Texas Election days.
- III. Research partnerships with community voter education and registration agencies for not only programming but expand to various formalized experiential learning opportunities.
- IV. Participate in the Presidents’ Commitment to Full Student Voter Participant initiative.

Short-Term Goals:

- I. *Re-build our interactive website*
 - a. <https://www.tamusa.edu/mays/students/jaguar-voter-engagement.html>
 - b. Bring in pictures and videos that promote student democracy engagement involvement at TAMUSA.
 - c. Partner with HACKSA (Hackathon) to present voter engagement platform development fully created by students.
- II. *Blackboard & Social Media*
 - a. Build a relationship with our JagWire Blackboard, a homepage for students and faculty members, therefore we can post about upcoming election and days in which we will be a polling site to all of our students and faculty.
 - b. Create an individualized social media account for all social media platforms that are solely dedicated to democratic/ civic engagement both on our campus and community.
- III. *Build Ongoing Coalition*
 - a. Year-round campus coalition with TAMUSA student organizations, student leaders, staff, and faculty to encourage and dedicate to student engagement in democracy.
 - b. Host voter registration at variety of campus events through this coalition. Examples include: Cisneros Leadership Conference, Weeks of Welcome, National Night Out, etc.

Strategy

A. Voter education:

1. Incorporating democratic engagement within key university traditions such as JagX (New Student Camp) and Campus Housing Move-In
 - Partnering with League of Women Voters to host an on-site tour of the Bexar County Election Department so first-time students can have a stronger understanding of democratic logistics
 - Leverage community partner to conduct tabling during move-in so new students can update registration status within first week of new residence if applicable
2. First-Year Experience Partnerships to ensure smooth streamlining within key population
 - Collaborating with team to leverage Common Read (My First Vote) focused on civic engagement. Recording the first-time voting experience stories of key campus leaders in podcast format that will be used via social media channels and as class supplemental materials.
 - Building of speaker speakers focused on various elements of civic and voter education. Sessions include: "Echoes of Change: Voices Beyond the Ballot", "Reform Education Roundtable", and "Engaging the Youth Vote".
3. Partner with student media sources to conduct campus interviews about the importance of voting and how to create informed voters.
4. Celebration of National Voter Registration Day in collaboration with Constitution Day. Partner with Academic Affairs, Mays Center, and SGA.

- Collaborate with multiple voter registration agencies to create a fair-like event for students to celebrate voter rights. This event will also plug in trivia engagement to educate attendees about how articles of the constitution helped create voting opportunities for citizens now.
- 5. Student Government Association – Assist in connecting members with VDR training so they supplement voter registration efforts through weekly campus tabling.
- 6. Encourage connections between civic-based campus events and voting, including promotion of civic opportunities with Campus Vote Project, Southwest Voter, Radical Registers, MOVE Texas, etc.
- 7. Coordinate and host debates/forums for local and primary elections.
- 8. Incorporate marketing of programming within HR E-Blasts and campus newsletter, the Growler.
- 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 A&M-SA for campus partners that will be registering others to vote. Bexar County requires 10-day notice and class size of 30 to move forward.
- 11. Hosting of various level electoral debates.
- 12. Presence of an on-campus polling site during early voting and election day for Fall 2024 term.

B. Voter registration:

1. Leverage community partners to conduct registration tabling during move-in so new students can update registration status within first week of new residence if applicable
2. Celebration of National Voter Registration Day in collaboration with Constitution Day. Partner with Academic Affairs, Mays Center, SGA and multiple voter registration agencies to create a fair-like event for students to celebrate voter rights.
3. Coordinate and host a Volunteer Deputy Registrar Class at A&M-SA for campus partners that will be registering others to vote. Bexar County requires 10-day notice and class size of 30 to move forward.
4. Schedule registration partners to distribute registration efforts throughout the year in key campus locations. Goal is to register 150 new voters.
5. Conduct passive program in which campus partners will display “Why They Vote” as a introduction to the Paws to the Polls campaign. This information will be used for a social media campaign as well.

Reporting

This plan will be shared with all members of our newly organized and dedicated civic/ democratic engagement coalition, posted on our dedicated voter engagement website and incorporated into reports to upper administration. We will also share the NSLVE data/report on the Student Leadership and First-Year offices. Where applicable, we will also share updates and information through social media channels and official University news outlets.

Evaluation

The evaluation of our efforts is vital for progress and the implementation of new concepts. The A&M-SA taskforce will use several methods to evaluate our progress:

- A&M-SA will recertify as a NSLVE data provider. NSLVE data is key to our high-level development of voting goals and evaluation of voter participation progress.
- Data collection for voter registration numbers are to be collected each time there is a tabling event or drive. Each community partner will be expected to supply monthly reporting of activity as well.
- Participation rates and program evaluations will be collected at each individual event.
- Data will be discussed and addressed during our taskforce meetings.