



Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan 2022-2023
Texas Lutheran University

Overview

Texas Lutheran University was founded in 1891 in Brenham, Texas and the school moved to Seguin in 1912. TLU is a private, four-year, liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies institution that has 27 majors, 37 minors, and 64 specializations. Additionally, TLU has 1,400 students with 55% of its population as first generation and 1/3 of the student body are athletes.

The John and Sandra Moline Center for Servant Leadership (CSL) provides centralized leadership for civic engagement at TLU, including an emphasis on quality over quantity, while also embracing community partners and students as co-educators. The CSL has 11 student coordinators, each serving as year-long liaisons to different community organizations and facilitating regular service opportunities for TLU students.

TLU is proud to be a 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 Voter Friendly Campus. TLU's current Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement work is supported by the CSL, two local nonpartisan organizations called Community Forum and MOVE Texas, and Campus Vote Project. Two of the eleven student coordinators trained and supervised by the CSL work directly with the CSL and partnering off-campus non-partisan agencies to create programming for TLU and the Seguin community regarding voter engagement and empowerment.

TLU has both long-term and short-term goals for civic learning and democratic engagement. The long-term goals listed below are a vision for the next five to ten years, while the short-term goals are a vision for the next 1-2 years. These goals were formulated in conversation with members of the Voter Engagement Coalition of Partners and TLU's NSLVE Report from 2020.

Long Term Goals

- Increase student voting rates by 10 percentage points from 2022 to 2026.
- Achieve an explicit, visible commitment on the part of the TLU president for improving civic learning and democratic engagement.
- Incorporate civic education and democratic engagement into co-curricular programs/departments outside of the Center for Servant Leadership.
- Utilize the Voter Engagement Coalition of Partners to accomplish tasks and make the team's reach larger, during election and non-election seasons.
- Implement civic and democratic engagement in the strategic planning for the next 5 years.
- Increase student voting rates for male college students at TLU by 5 percentage points from 2020 to 2022.

Short Term Goals

- Institutionalize the practice of the president sending a letter to all students every semester about the importance of being civically engaged and participating in elections.
- Develop resources for faculty with the CSL and Center for Teaching & Learning to incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into their classrooms.
- Establish Memorandums of Understanding with external partners, including Community Forum and MOVE Texas.
- Register 75% of incoming first-year and transfer students to vote during orientation and/or first semester at TLU.
- Increase the number of students completing absentee ballots, for those applicable during the COVID-19 pandemic or non-traditional students.
- Create an open relationship between the Democracy Fellows and TLU students through increased visibility and transparency of their work.

Coalition

The TLU Voter Coalition functioned very successfully in the fall 2020 semester. Beginning in spring 2020, the Director of the TLU Center for Servant Leadership and the two Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows began to gather a list of names that would be a good fit to join the Coalition in fall 2020. The Voter Coalition met for the first time on September 1, 2020 and proceeded to meet every two weeks until the end of November 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we shifted all of our meetings to be virtual via Zoom. Through 2021 and the start of 2022, the coalition continued to meet via Zoom. The typical format of these coalition meetings includes time for updates from the Center for Servant Leadership (CSL) director and the Democracy Fellows, overview of upcoming events and programs, volunteer opportunities to support programs, and then an open time to discuss questions, concerns, and brainstorm items.

The Voter Coalition is made up of many campus community members, who were each asked to join because of the nature of their campus role, or they joined due to personal interest. We wanted a robust group of faculty and staff members involved from various parts of campus to help with increasing the reach of the coalition's work. Some particular members were specifically asked to join due to their role on campus, such as our campus Advocacy Coordinator, faculty members from the political science department, and the Director of Student Activities due to their role with campus programs and Student Government Association. As for student involvement, some students asked to join the coalition due to their interest, but we also intentionally did outreach with several special population groups, such as the Black Student Union and the Mexican American Student Association. It was a priority to us that the Voter Coalition was reflective of the diversity of the whole student body, with various races, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, partisan affiliations, and more represented. We were also intentional with including both of the partisan political student organizations so that there was equal representation from each.

In addition to campus members of the coalition, we included two community organizations as coalition members, Community Forum and MOVE Texas. Both of these organizations have been working with the TLU Center for Servant Leadership to support voter engagement for several years. They were a natural fit to be included on the coalition and were able to provide some outside resources to support our campus initiatives. We plan to expand to include additional community partners in the future, as needed.

Current coalition members and the 2022 Democracy Fellows will be tasked with helping to recruit additional coalition members, especially since several members were a part of the recent graduating class. If needed, the Center for Servant Leadership Director can also assist with making outreach to students via the TLU student email list-serv. Since many of the current members are also faculty or staff, these coalition members can also help to identify new coalition members. The TLU Voter Coalition will continue to be co-led by the Director of the Center for Servant Leadership and the two 2022 CVP Democracy Fellows. At this time, the primary point of contact for this initiative and the coalition is:

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TLU Voter Coalition Members

Staff Members

Dr. Malukah Pitts Harvey, *Associate Vice President of Student Affairs*
Dr. Gourjoine Wade, *Vice President of Student Affairs*
Dr. David Ortiz, *Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)*
Andella Janicek, *Director of Campus Activities & Student Engagement*
Samira López, *Director of First Year Experience & Students Transitions, Chair of the First Year Experience Committee*
Sarah Story, *Vice President for Admissions, Marketing, & Communications*
TBD, *Representative of TLU Athletics*

Faculty Members

Prof. Collin Bost, *Assistant Professor, Communication, Cultures, English & World Languages*
Dr. Daniel Braaten, *Associate Professor, Political Science, Sociology & Geography, and former Civic Engagement Faculty Fellow*
Dr. Liliana Guerrero, *Director of Vocal Studies, School of Music*
Dr. Robert Jonas, *Professor, Biology*
Dr. Jennifer Mata, *Associate Professor, Communication, Cultures, English & World Languages, and the Director of the Center for Mexican American Studies*
Dr. Lauren Shook, *Assistant Professor, Communication, Cultures, English & World Languages, former Civic Engagement Faculty Fellow, and Interim African American Studies Director*
Dr. Germaine Walsh, *Professor, Political Science, Sociology & Geography, and the International Studies Program Director*

Student Members

Isabella Schaar, *Student and Democracy Fellow*
Beyonce Harris, *Student*
Chase Bell, *Student Government Senator and former Democracy Fellow*
Jonathan Rodriguez, *Student and Vice President of Student Government Association*

Community Members

Mike Barrow, *Community Forum*
Vickie De La Rosa, *Community Forum*
Jonathan Gutierrez, *Mobilize. Organize. Vote. Empower (MOVE) Texas*
Jenna Greene, *Campus Vote Project and TLU Alumna*

Description of our Work

Our work from 2021/2022 and our future for voter engagement in 2023/2024 is broken down into four pillars: voter registration, voter education, voter turnout, and student voting rights.

Voter Registration

Voter registration is achieved in a variety of ways to combat some of the challenges of the pandemic. We rely heavily on faculty members allowing us access to their classrooms to do class presentations. We are able to interact with all first-year students through the video that was added to virtual orientation and/or classroom presentation. Additionally, all first-year students are enrolled in FREX, which has a new lesson taught by their peer mentors on voter registration. They also read a shared read book about the issue of voting. Optionally, the faculty members teaching FREX can invite a member of our team to present to their class about voter registration and complete an in-person voter registration opportunity. Outside of FREX, we also offer in-person voter registration to all classes at TLU. All of these presentations are made possible by the CSL Director, the Democracy Fellows, and/or the CSL student coordinator for voter registration. In addition to classroom presentations, we also offered tabling in our student center/common center bi-weekly before every registration deadline.

TLU participated in National Voter Registration Day for the fourth year on September 28, 2021. This was an intentional push for in-person voter registration since that is the primary way that Texas residents register. Texas does not have an online voter registration process that does not require printing and mailing in a form. For National Voter Registration Day, we hosted a table in a popular indoor spot on campus and were available for registering students in several surrounding counties, including Guadalupe, Comal, Hayes, and Bexar.

Regular emails were sent to all students, faculty, and staff to remind them about the voter registration deadlines. We encouraged faculty members to add these dates into their syllabi in August, and also encouraged them to mention these deadlines in their classes. All of the important voter registration deadlines were listed [on the TLU website](#) as well.

Voter Education

Nonpartisan voter education is a huge priority of this year's voter engagement plan. Since our student population was and still is taking classes in a hybrid format of some in-person and some online classes, we utilized social media and email as great tools to reach students. During the first week of October leading up to the voter registration deadline, we celebrated Voter Education Week and promoted it on our CSL social media pages ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and Instagram: @csltlu). Each day of that week aligned with a voter education topic, such as Voter Registration, Voter Education, Early Voting, and more. The CSL Director and the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs emailed faculty, staff, and students regularly with links to nonpartisan websites where they could access information, such as the [League of Women Voters](#) and the [www.vote411.org](#) website. Particularly, we highlighted the Vote 411 What's On Your Ballot tool as an easy way for students to determine their affinity with a candidate and pre-select candidates. In all of our social media and email campaigns, we always included language to normalize that questions about voting are normal.

We feel that there is certainly room to grow to continually improve our voter education initiatives. Amplifying resources that already exist locally, statewide, and nationally are also a great way for the TLU Voter Coalition to work smartly instead of taking on the burden of creating all of those resources in house. We often re-share nonpartisan voter education information on our social media platforms as well to amplify other resources. The TLU Democracy Fellows received training to remain nonpartisan in their conversations with students and to keep that nonpartisan identity in mind when planning programs with the CSL and/or Voter Coalition. Especially during the pandemic, people are being over-saturated and over-stimulated with information, so we tried to infuse voter education into as many avenues as possible to hopefully reach as many students as possible. We plan to continue this method in future election seasons.

Voter Turnout

We tried to focus a lot of efforts in encouraging students to get out and vote. Leading up to Election Day and the Texas early voting period, we started a social media campaign asking students to consider making a voting plan. We also host "What's on the Ballot" events on campus for students to participate in creating a fake ballot. We posted links and reminders about deadlines for student options (i.e. early voting, absentee ballots, or election day voting), which was also broadcast in campus-wide emails. The Texas Votes and Campus Vote Project social media accounts shared a lot of great

information that we also re-shared on our feeds. Our major social media campaign for voter turnout was the “Show us your Sticker” campaign, where we asked for students to tag us in photos with their “I Voted” stickers. We were able to re-share these and also ask our mascot Lucky and the TLU President to participate.

On Election Day, we host a Party at the Polls event outside of the campus polling place to celebrate voting. The Party at the Polls event includes lots of free giveaways open to all students, regardless of voting status or eligibility. We give away shirts and buttons, drinks, cupcakes, donuts, and stickers. This event is always a great encouragement for students to either come by and vote, or just stop by to celebrate.

Student Voting Rights

We are very proud to have an on-campus polling place at Texas Lutheran University. As part of our agreement with the city and Elections Office, the Voter Coalition had to provide volunteers from 7am-7pm to ensure safety guidelines were being followed by folks in line to vote. All went smoothly and we believe the TLU Alumni Student Center (ASC) location is great for presidential elections. Overall, having the on-campus polling place is a huge success and we feel grateful to have this opportunity for our students and community members.

Another success we feel aids our support of student voting rights is that we have a positive relationship with our local county elections office. If a student's voter registration form has an error or is not legible, the elections office will call the Center for Servant Leadership to verify information rather than having to throw those forms out. To return the favor and continue our positive relationship, TLU continually provides volunteers to help serve as election workers. This is a great learning opportunity for our students and also helped to grow our positive partnership with the elections office.

NSLVE Data

Whenever we receive our campus' NSLVE report, we always make a plan to share that information out with campus in a transparent way. First, we always share the information with the TLU President, the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, and President's Cabinet. Additionally, the plan is shared with the TLU Voter Coalition to use in future planning and targeted programming. The NSLVE data will be shared with students, faculty, and staff via email, and a graphic will be promoted on the Bulldog TV system to encourage voting. Finally, the plan will be shared with the community by it being publicly posted on the TLU external website and the internal learning management system portal page. The TLU Voter Coalition plans to use this data and the trends from the 2020 and previous NSLVE reports to see what programming would be most helpful in reaching future voters. The demographic information on gender, race, ethnicity, and other factors, will help the Coalition, the CSL, and Democracy Fellows to prioritize support for populations.

As reported in the 2020 NSLVE report, TLU had a 64.6% voting rate, which was a +21.1 increase from 2016. We registered an additional 239 students on campus from 2016 to 2020, and had a 389 student increase in who voted from 2016 to 2020. We will continue to use the 2020 NSLVE data to gear our programming more towards STEM students, male students, student athletes, and non-traditional students/adult learners to better serve our student population.

Beyond 2022

Looking into the rest of 2022 and future years, we want to keep the level of engagement up for our students. Our Voter Coalition is very excited and passionate about keeping the momentum going. We hope to do this by:

- Increase the number and presence of voter deputy registrars on campus, using folks that are part of the Voter Coalition. We hope to host additional trainings for members of our community to get VDR certified.
- Host deliberative dialogue programs to continue community conversations.
- Host education programming to get students involved in letter writing about issues they care about or learning more about civics. We also believe it would be valuable to explore partnerships with the local city council and mayor's office to encourage TLU students to be more involved in local politics.

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In fall 2022, we will continue our surge of voter registration efforts for the incoming first-year students. We hope to continue what we have been doing with prioritizing first-year voter registration, knowing that upperclassmen are likely already registered from previous first-year registration pushes. The Voter Coalition and Center for Servant Leadership Director are planning to use successful programs from 2018 and 2020 to plan for the 2022 general election. Now that we have two iterations of campus action plans, feedback on those plans, and end-of-year reports, we can utilize these as frameworks to build out programming in 2022/2023 and beyond.