



TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY™

2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Campus Action Plan

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Executive Summary

The Texas Woman's University (TWU) Campus Action Plan is developed and implemented by the student-led Pioneers Vote Initiative under the leadership of the Assistant Director of Civic Engagement. The Pioneers Vote team will rely on this action plan to act as a road map for reaching the continued goal of increasing campuswide civic engagement opportunities and supporting current work taking place on campus.

This action plan serves as a coordinated effort to enhance civic engagement opportunities for our students and to support ongoing initiatives. Our long-term goals include creating a campus civic engagement "ethos" by creating student-led campus initiatives inside and outside the classroom that celebrate civic engagement. In the short term, we aim to boost voter registration rates and increase the participation of registered voters during elections.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, we have made progress toward these goals by expanding opportunities for student involvement. The plan will be reviewed regularly, with updates scheduled for the Spring 2025 semester. TWU is dedicated to ensuring full voter participation among eligible students, and through Pioneers Vote, we will lead a unified effort to engage and empower our student voters.

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Texas Woman's University for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 election.

For the 2024 election, Texas Woman's University (TWU) has set several key goals to enhance civic engagement within our campus community:

Increase Voter Education, Registration, and Turnout: We aim to provide comprehensive resources and programming to educate students about the voting process, ensuring they are well-informed and motivated to participate.

Promote Campus as an Early Polling Location: We will work to designate TWU as an early voting site, making it more convenient for students to cast their ballots.

Provide a Safe Space for Dialogue: TWU is committed to fostering an inclusive environment that encourages diverse thoughts and opinions, promoting respectful discussions around civic issues.

Establish and Strengthen Community Partnerships: By building collaborations with local organizations, we can enhance our outreach efforts and create more opportunities for student involvement in civic activities.

Through these initiatives, TWU seeks to empower students, increase engagement, and support a vibrant democratic process on campus.

Leadership

During the 2023-2024 academic year, due to changes in campus leadership, the Civic Engagement Task Force stopped meeting and was no longer working on the initiatives created by the previous leadership. During this time, the Pioneers Vote Organization which was established to empower students to be civically engaged and facilitate opportunities for civic engagement on campus lost membership and two of its four interns. As of September 17, 2024, two students have been selected to fill the open intern positions and complete the Pioneers Vote Leadership Team. It is the goal that during the 2024-2025 academic year, the task force will be re-established and resume the work previously started. In the interim, the Assistant Director of Civic Engagement has been leading the Pioneers Vote team to continue to promote civic engagement initiatives at Texas Woman's University.

The Pioneers Vote team currently includes:

- Dr. Samantha Sorensen, Assistant Director of Civic Engagement
- Janjay Greene, Andrew Goodman Ambassador
- Sirri Tabufor, Andrew Goodman Ambassador (newly selected)
- Tha lang, Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow
- Summer Washington, Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow (newly selected)

Our current partnerships are coordinated by the Assistant Director of Civic Engagement and includes the following on and off campus groups and organizations:

Pioneers Vote: The Pioneers Vote organization is the primary driving force for student civic engagement initiatives and is led by four interns consisting of two Andrew Goodman Ambassadors and two Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows.

Center for Student Involvement: The Center for Student Involvement supports the Pioneers Vote organization by providing them with funding, materials, and space to plan and promote events and outreach.

Student Government Association: The Student Government Association partners with Pioneers Vote to promote civic engagement events and shares resources in collaborative event efforts.

The Center for Women in Government: The Center for Women in Government partners with Pioneers Vote to help reach academic offices and spaces and promote civic engagement initiatives in the classroom and beyond.

League of Women Voters: The League of Women Voters has partnered with the Pioneers Vote team to host voter registration initiatives. The goal is to continue to cultivate and strengthen that partnership by having a student that is dedicated to working with off campus partners and communicating our events and programs.

Commitment

Institutional Ethos. Texas Woman's University (TWU) is the nation's largest public female-focused university with campuses in Denton, Dallas, and Houston. Founded in 1901 before women were allowed to vote or own property, the empowerment of women and other underrepresented populations is a core component of our campus ethos. Our institutional vision is, "Texas Woman's will be known as the premier public university for a woman-focused education and leadership development, graduating thriving citizens who have a strong sense of community, health, prosperity, and a sense of purpose." Our motto is "We Learn to Do by Doing". The Texas State Legislature voted in 2021 to make Texas Woman's University a system.

Strategic Plan. Texas Woman’s University is in the process of implementing its latest strategic plan, “Momentum” Strategic Plan 2028. As part of that plan, the institution continues to emphasize civic engagement as one of the areas of institutional focus. Tenants of the latest strategic plan include:

Using TWU to Serve the Community. Using the power of our systemness to serve our communities better. Texas Woman’s University is the only university system in the United States with a focus on women’s education. This gives us an opportunity to explore the unique contributions that TWU’s three campuses can make within the communities they serve, and for each campus to develop a distinct mission in teaching, research, and community outreach.

Student Prosperity. Elevate student prosperity into the heart of all we do. Texas Woman’s University is dedicated to equipping our students with the tools to become engaged leaders and global citizens. We strive to provide our students with an environment, enveloped in care, that celebrates their diversity, while building them up as both individuals and as part of a community. Our commitment to academic excellence and integrity is the foundation of our drive for student prosperity. With campus collaborations and a multitude of interdisciplinary and social events, we endeavor to provide deliberately crafted interactions and experiences that are offered contributing to student’s physical, mental and academic health.

Amplify Social Impacts. Amplify the social impact aspects of our mission and brand. Texas Woman’s University envisions a transformative approach to amplify the social impact aspects of our mission and brand. We commit to mitigating injustice through educating, supporting, centering, and empowering women and marginalized voices. We prioritize documenting and boosting existing social impact initiatives as well as investing in the collective well-being of our institutional members and external community.

Quality Enhancement Plan. TWU adopted in spring 2023 a new QEP: Amplify Your Impact. The aim of this plan is to create a bridge between scholarly/creative work, public understanding, and public trust on topics that are critical to our collective wellbeing. The first student outcome for this plan is: "Students will be able to responsibly extend knowledge from academic study to social issues related to community wellbeing." This outcome creates further connectedness between academia and student affairs as programs are created and shifted to nest within this charge.

State Support. Established in 2018 through specialized funding from Governor Greg Abbott, the Institute for Women's Leadership serves the State of Texas as a resource for scholarship and research. It includes an interactive learning environment for young Texans to learn about the contributions of women leaders to Texas' history. The Institute provide a rich array of scholarship opportunities, lecture series, and will be a focal point for research into the role of women in politics and public policy in the widest sense and seeks to increase the number of women in leadership positions and focus on developing women's leadership capacity. The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy is one branch of the Institute. The Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy seeks to increase the number of women in leadership positions in public service. Their goal is to become a destination for young women who desire to dedicate their professional careers to public service, advocacy and leadership.

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement [NSLVE]

TWU is a participating institution in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement. Our 2018 Midterm voting results were a notable increase from our 2014 results. In 2014, 72.3% of our students registered to vote with 27.8% of those registered voting in the elections for a total “voting rate” of 20.1%. In 2018, 76.5% of our students registered to vote with 63.1% of those registered voting in the election for an overall “voting rate” of 48.3%. We surpassed the voting rate for all institutions (39.1%).

In 2020, our voting rate was 66.9%, a 15.7% increase from 2016. We surpassed the 2020 voting rate for all institutions (66%). In 2016, our voting rate was 51.9%. We surpassed the 2016 voting rate for all institutions (50.4%). Our 2016 voting results also increased from our 2012 voting rate of 48%.

During the time of transition in the roles that support civic engagement programs, contacts for the NSLVE data have changed and we are still awaiting updated contacts to receive the most recent NSLVE data. We should receive the 2022 NSLVE data within the next few weeks and will update our campus plan at that time.

As we look forward to 2024, our focus is on “more” – more voter registrations, more registered voters voting, and more access to polls. Our voting rates have gone up in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 in all areas. With the exception of a decrease in the percentage of black student voters in 2016 (a nation-wide phenomenon), we haven’t been able to identify a particular area of weakness or need. We were particularly happy with the increase in the percentage of registered voters voting for the 2018 Midterm elections and will include messaging in our PR efforts toward that end. Our goal is to saturate the campus with our voter efforts to continue to raise our student voter participation.

Landscape

Students. The Fall 2023 total student enrollment at Texas Woman’s University was 15,664 students. Denton serves as our main campus with a Fall 2023 enrollment of over 12,679 undergraduate and graduate students. The gender breakdown for Fall 2023 was 87.86% female and 12.14% male. Texas Woman’s University is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HIS) with 31.82% of the student population identifying as Hispanic/Latinx. Our most prevalent majors are arts & sciences and nursing majors with 24.1% and 21.4% of students respectively. Other interesting facts about TWU are that over 50% of our students are first-generation.

Current Campus Efforts. The following outlines our current and ongoing campus efforts.

Voter Registration. Pioneers Vote is our branded, institution-wide voter registration initiative. The Assistant Director for Civic Engagement, our Andrew Goodman Ambassadors, and our Democracy Fellows coordinate the calendar for voter registration tables, including coordinating with outside entities to participate in tabling and outreach events.

Voter Education. The Pioneers Vote team also coordinates National Voter Registration Day activities and coordinates a last day to register event. There are Civic Engagement and Pioneers Vote pages on our Pioneers Engage (Campus Labs) platform that advertises events, voter registration, and community partnership activities.

Voter Access. Our biggest achievement in 2019-2020 was working with Denton County Board of Elections to get a polling site on the TWU Denton campus. TWU hosted a polling site for the November 2019 elections, but the onset of COVID 19 thwarted our efforts and we lost our polling site. We were able to work with the Denton County Board of Elections again this year to secure TWU as an early polling site for the upcoming elections.

Campus Climate. The campus culture at TWU is supportive of the examination of societal issues with the intent of developing future (female) community leaders. Activism events, such as protests, are extremely rare. The research regarding women and voting that has helped to understand the campus culture and direct our initiatives accordingly. Research has shown that women vote and even engage in public service based on their passion for different societal issues and their desire to help their community, instead of a particular political affiliation, so we focus on issues-based education as well as voter registration/education.

Goals

Texas Woman's University has set several key goals to enhance civic engagement within our campus community. TWU seeks to empower students, increase engagement, and support a vibrant democratic process on campus.

Long Term Goals. Through the various changes the civic engagement area has experienced recently, the long-term goals for civic engagement remain the same. TWU's overall long-term goal is to support students in developing as lifelong active citizens and community leaders. To move toward that goal over the next 10 years, we hope to:

Institutionalize Civic Engagement. To institutionalize civic engagement initiatives by developing civic engagement traditions/events that are part of our culture, institutionalizing our task force, and linking our work to institutional core learning objectives.

Exceed Civic Engagement Standards. We will work to consistently obtain platinum status in the All-In Democracy Challenge and always exceed the national NSLVE voting rate.

Student Led Engagement. Make our civic engagement work a student-led initiative with more individual and student organization involvement.

Short Term Goals. During this time of rebuilding, our short-term goals will focus on reigniting the excitement and dedication to promoting civic engagement initiatives campus wide. Current short-term goals include:

The Pioneers Vote Team. We will work to strengthen and support Pioneers Vote by filling all the intern positions and establishing dedicated time together.

Expand Pioneers Vote. Expand Pioneers Vote by establishing a membership and volunteer structure that give students information about what Pioneers Vote is doing on campus.

Re-establish the Civic Engagement Task Force at TWU. One of the more immediate short-term goals is to re-establish the Civic Engagement Task Force.

Voter Registration, Education, and Access. Continue to promote voter registration and access by making registering to vote and participating in polling/voting easy and readily available on campus.

Strategies

The following strategies serve as a guide to the implementation of our long and short term goals.

Long Term Goal Strategies. While our long term goals remain similar to existing goals from previous years, due to staff turnover and office reorganization, some of the strategies we will be using to implement them have changed.

Institutionalizing & Student Led Initiatives. We will continue to work towards institutionalizing civic engagement by partnering with academic and non-academic departments to encourage student involvement in civic engagement initiatives and encourage students to take ownership of these initiatives by providing them with the resources and support to plan, promote, and host their own programs and events.

Promote Voter Engagement. We will continue to work on promoting voter engagement by partnering with Student Government to coordinate and advertise federal, state, and local elections as well as campus elections. The current campus elections structure will be modified to more closely mirror federal, state, and local elections in an effort to encourage students to participate in elections activities. The goal is to demystify the elections and voting process and use these opportunities to create voting habits that will follow students beyond graduation.

Campus and Community Connections. We will work to rebuild our community connections with the Denton County Board of Elections through increased communication and partnering to promote TWU as an early voting polling site. We also hope to strengthen our connections to the Texas League of Women Voters, Denton Votes, and Jolt. On-campus community collaborations will also be a key focus as we continue to strengthen our communication and partnerships with various campus departments and organizations including our Student Government, Residence Hall Association, Student Union Programming, Dean's Office, Center for Women in Government, and the Office of Civility.

Short Term Goal Strategies. Due to the staff turnover and reorganization most of our short term goals will focus on the immediate need to rebuild and strengthen our current programs and former initiatives that either ended or lost momentum during the time of transition.

Strengthen the Pioneers Vote Team. We will work to strengthen and support Pioneers Vote by establishing dedicated meeting and event planning times where the interns can share their goals and initiatives for the campus and work together to create a campus wide presence. This includes meeting as a team and meeting individually with the Pioneers Vote Advisor.

Expand Pioneers Vote. We will work to expand Pioneers Vote's reach by establishing a membership structure that encourages more students to get involved by participating in open meetings, event preparation, and volunteering to work events that support the mission of Pioneers Vote.

Re-establish the Civic Engagement Task Force at TWU. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Civic Engagement Task Force lost momentum and stopped meeting. One of the more immediate short-term goals is to re-establish the Civic Engagement Task Force; the re-establishment of this task force will put campus wide support behind the Pioneers Vote team from academic and non-academic offices.

Voter Registration, Education, and Access. Continue to promote voter registration and access by making registering to vote and participating in polling/voting easy and readily available on campus. This includes regular voter registration tabling events, making sure all Pioneers Vote students that are able become a VDR. We have also reached out to staff across campus and asked them to participate in VDR training and participate in tabling events hosted on campus. We also have voter registration drop-in hours every week, students can come to the Center for Student Involvement and register to vote.

Tactics & Timeline

Short Term: Fall 2024 - The following events/programs are happening on campus during the fall 2024 semester.

- Voter Registration Tabling; August - October
- UNIV 1231 First Vote Presentations; August - November
- Voter Registration Drive @ TWU Block Party; August
- Org Fest Tabling & Voter Registration; August
- Debate Watch Party Event & VR Tabling; September
- National Voter Registration Day Event; September
- Race to Register - Last Day to Register to Vote Event; October
- Voter Education Week Events; October
- Walk to the Polls Event; October
- TWU Early Polling Site; October & November
- Post-Elections Event; November

Mid Term: Spring 2025 - The following events/programs are planned and scheduled for the spring 2025 semester.

- Pioneers Vote Org Revamp; January - February
- Pioneers Vote Info Tabling; January - May
- Local & County Elections Info Tabling; January - May
- Highlighting & Participating in Local Government; January - May
- Voter Registration Tabling; January - April
- Campus Elections Participation; February - April
- TWU Polling Site; TBD

Ongoing - The following are things that will begin in the Fall of 2024 and be ongoing.

- Pioneers Vote Intern Meetings; bi-weekly
- Pioneers Vote Member Meetings; monthly
- Civic Engagement Task Force Meetings; bi-weekly/monthly
- Voter Registration and Education; weekly

Evaluation

The following are the ways we will monitor and evaluate our programs and services throughout the year.

Meetings. The Pioneers Vote team and, in the future, the Civic Engagement Task Force will meet regularly to plan and check-in on goal progress and to make any necessary adjustments to our goals.

Event Reports & Tracking. Information for events is tracked through Pioneer Engage, our Campus Labs platform that logs all student attendance for events as well as administers post-event surveys. Additionally, when partner organizations are on-campus registering students to vote we collect their registration numbers to count the number of newly registered students per year. Samantha Sorensen is the point-person for collecting partner organization data and downloading Pioneer Engage event reports.

NSLVE. All NSLVE data is reviewed, and the reports are shared with on and off campus partners and stakeholders. The data is used to inform our program planning and marketing.

Research. Pioneer Engage will allow us to easily track and access attendance and engagement data with our events. We can also conduct research through pulse surveys and post-event surveys.

Continuous Evaluation. This Campus Action Plan will be reviewed at the beginning and end of each semester in order to ensure that we are making progress towards our goals and update goals as needed.

Reporting

The following is a list of services that TWU provides as options for reporting results and sharing civic engagement plans.

- Pioneer Engage - Campus Labs Platform
- Lasso - Student News Paper
- Social Media Sites
- TWU Campus Events Calendar
- Voter Participation Display
- Presentations to SGA, RHA, and other campus stakeholders
- Presentations to the Board of Regents and Executive Cabinet.