



TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY™

CIVIC LEARNING AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN FOR

VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, AND ENGAGEMENT

2020-2021

Executive Summary

Texas Woman's University (TWU) is the nation's largest public female-focused university. As a female-focused and very diverse campus, TWU understands the need for civic education across our student body. The TWU Voter Engagement Campus Plan is developed and implemented by members of the TWU Civic Engagement Task Force, a cross-campus collaborative work group, charged by the Vice President for Student Life. This action plan is a coordinated way for members of the TWU community to work together to create more opportunities for civic engagement and support current work already taking place on campus. Our long-term goals include creating a campus civic engagement "ethos" by creating student-led campus traditions inside and outside the classroom that celebrate civic engagement. Our short-term goals include increasing our voter registration rates and our registered voter voting rates. By adding opportunities for our students, increasing our connections to faculty, and building on our community connections in 2020-2021, we continue to make strides to our long term civic engagement goals. TWU is committed to full voter participation for eligible students.

Leadership

The Civic Engagement Task Force. The Civic Engagement Task Force, within the Division of Student Affairs, oversees the institution's efforts to increase civic learning and democratic engagement. The Civic Engagement Task Force includes:

- Dr. Stephanie Krauth, Associate Vice President for Student Engagement (chair)
- Tammy Key, Associate Director for the Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy
- Dr. Jennifer Danley-Scott, Assistant Professor for History/Government
- Mere' Maddox, Assistant Director for Residence Education
- Gabe Cruz, Assistant Director of Fit & Recreation
- Amy Evans, Director of Communication for Student Life
- TBA, Director of Civility and Community Standards
- TBA, Assistant Director for Diversity, Inclusion, & Outreach
- Chris Scanlan, Coordinator for Civic Engagement
- 2 Andrew Goodman Foundation Student Ambassadors

- Cassandra Gonzales – Freshman, Political Science major from Burleson, TX
- Fiama Villagrana-Ocasio – Freshman, Political Science major from Houston, TX
- 2 Campus Voter Project Democracy Fellows (Calendar Year 2020 only)
 - Alondra Suggs – Junior, Political Science major from Cedar Hill, TX
 - Maria Gonzalez – Junior, Biology major from Dallas, TX
- Student representatives from SGA, RHA, LULAC and Pi Sigma Alpha (Political Science Honorary)

The search processes to fill the Director of Civility and Community Standards and the Assistant Director of Diversity, Inclusion, and Outreach positions are currently underway and should be completed by mid-summer 2020. The intent is to keep the same Andrew Goodman Foundation Student Ambassadors for multiple years. The Campus Voter Project Democracy Fellows are for the calendar year 2020 only.

The Civic Engagement Alliance (CEA). The CEA, facilitated by the Coordinator of Civic Engagement, is a collaborative effort by organizations at Texas Woman’s University to improve voter engagement, as well as other forms of civic engagement, on campus. Started in Fall 2019, participation is very simple, organizations choose a rep to attend one meeting per month, register the students in their organization to vote, and share nonpartisan voting information around election time. By including both political and nonpolitical groups in the CEA, we are able to ensure that we include students from all walks of life in our campus plan.

Community Partners: We will strategically engage external partners, such as, but not limited to:

- Denton VOTE coalition
- MOVE Texas coalition
- Denton County Board of Elections
- Campus Votes Project
- The Andrew Goodman Foundation
- All In Democracy Challenge
- The Texas League of Women Voters

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”.

Strategic Plan. Texas Woman’s University is in the process of implementing its latest strategic plan, “Learn to Thrive: 2022”. As part of that plan, the institution has chosen to emphasize civic engagement as one of

the areas of institutional development and growth. The Division of Student Life has set the goal to “create campus traditions and service opportunities that advance civic engagement as our community ethos for the purpose of fostering an inclusive campus community that creates a shared sense of connection, belonging, and social responsibility.” The percent of students indicating engagement in community service and civic engagement activities is expected to increase from 39% (2015) to 50% by 2022.

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.

Landscape

Students. The Fall 2019 total student enrollment at Texas Woman's University was almost 16,000 students. Denton serves as our main campus with a Fall 2019 enrollment of over 13,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The gender breakdown for Fall 2019 was 87.5% female and 12.5% male. Forty-two percent of our students are over the age of 25 with 58% of our students with an age of 18-24. Texas Woman's University is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HIS) with 27% of the student population identifying as Hispanic/LatinX. Our most prevalent majors are nursing, health sciences (OT, PT), business, and education. Other interesting facts about TWU are that 54% of our students are first-generation and 51% of our students are Pell-eligible. Twenty-one percent of our students reside on campus.

Current Campus Efforts.

Voter Registration. Although the Office of Civility and Community Standard has facilitated voter registration and “Get To The Polls” activities for years, the intentional emphasis on civic engagement is fairly new to Texas Woman's University, beginning in Fall 2018. Pioneer Votes is our branded, institution-wide voter registration initiative. The Civic Engagement Task Force coordinates the calendar for voter registration tables, including coordinating with outside entities to host voter registration tables at no charge. One of our biggest achievements during the 2019-2022 academic year has been working with the Denton County Board of Elections to host a Voter Registration Deputy training on the TWU campus.

Voter Education. Our “Speak Up” Series is a campus-wide collaboration to offer intentional programmatic offerings on societal issues and civic initiatives. The Civic Engagement Task Force coordinates the “Speak Up” calendar by reaching out to campus constituents regarding their civic engagement educational initiatives and promoting those initiatives, as well as, creating initiatives within the task force. One of our most popular events is “Pioneering Politics”, where we invite women in public service from across the state for a panel discussion. The Civic Engagement Task Force also coordinates National Voter Registration Day activities and participates on the campus-wide Constitution Day committee. There is a Civic Engagement page on our Pioneers Engage (Campus Labs) platform that

advertises events, voter registration, and community service opportunities. Our TurboVote link is housed on that page.

Voter Access. Our biggest achievement in 2019-2020 has been 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, will be an early voting site for the 2020 Primaries, will host a polling site for the May/June elections & runoffs as needed, and has been asked to be a polling site for the 2020 November Presidential 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, but our student population has not been attracted to the bipartisan nature of politics. While our voting rates are good, we do not have College Republicans or College Democrats organizations at TWU. Activism events, such as protests, are extremely rare. We have found research regarding women and voting that has helped us understand our 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 and that's why we put together the "Speak Up" series.

National Student 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 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 results. In 2012, 74.6% of our students registered to vote with 64.3% of those registered voting in the elections for a total "voting rate" of 48%. In 2016, 78.3% of our students registered to vote with 66.3% of those registered voting in the election for an overall "voting rate" of 51.9%.

As we look forward to 2020, 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, and 2018 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 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.

Long Term Goals (2020 & Beyond)

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” our 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.
- Consistently obtain platinum status in the All-In Democracy Challenge and always exceed the national NSLVE voting rate.
- Make our civic engagement work a student-led initiative with more student organization involvement.
- Develop campus and community connections.

Short Term Goals (2020-2021)

We are excited to build on the momentum from our 2018 civic engagement efforts, and to build on what we have learned. For the short term, we are focused on the 2020 presidential election. The goals are:

- To increase our 2016 Voting Rate by 9 points, from 51.0% to 60.0%.
- To increase our 2016 Registration Rate by 5 points, from 78% to 83%.
- To increase our 2016 Rate of Registered Students who Voted from 66% to 75%

Strategy

Here are some of our strategies for 2020-2021 that feed into our long-term goals:

Student-led initiative. TWU has recently partnered with The Andrew Goodman Foundation, which allow us to have 2 student interns. We have also been invited by the Campus Voting Project to host two interns for the 2020-2021 academic year. Our four new interns will coordinate a new classroom presentation initiative, help us build the Civic Engagement Alliance, and coordinate the voter registration deputy training.

“Institutionalizing”. We have great working partnership with several academic departments across the university, but are looking to increase our faculty connections by adding an additional faculty member or two to the group and by assigning a point person from task force that checks in with academic departments regarding their civic engagement initiatives to offer support. We will ask for a member of the task force or someone from the Center for Politics & Public policy to be able to attend new faculty orientation.

Community Connections. We will continue to build on our community connections with the Denton County Board of Elections through the use of TWU as a polling site. We also hope to host a Texas Tribune event on the TWU campus in the 2020-2021 academic year.

Here are our strategies for 2020-2021 to meet our short-term goals:

Voter Registration. In addition to our weekly voter registration tables, Constitution Day, and National Voter Registration Day, we will be adding emphasis to the last week of voter registration, tabling events during Pioneer Camp (Fall Orientation), and student organization and athletic teams’ voter registration.

We will also be utilizing a golf cart to create a fun “mobile voter registration” option throughout campus.

Voter Education. We will be adding debate watch parties, traveling town hall events, and additional issues-based panels to our “Speak Up” event calendar. TWU opened a new student union in Spring 2020, so we will be using the new facility to host a very big National Voter Registration Day event in Fall 2020.

Voter Access. TWU will serve as a polling site for the 2020 Presidential Election.

Reporting

Texas Woman’s University will use several options for reporting our results, which include, but are not limited to:

- Utilizing our Campus Labs/Engage platform program page to promote and report on Turbo Vote and our voter registration progress
- An article and ad in the Lasso (student newspaper)
- Updates via social media
- Voter participation display in our student union & across campus
- Presentations to SGA, RHA, and other campus constituents and leadership.
- Presentations to our Board of Regents and Executive Cabinet.

We plan on using these different options to report our NSLVE data, voter registration numbers, civic engagement programming participation, community engagement (service) hours, etc.

Evaluation

Texas Woman’s University will use several methods to evaluate our progress which include, but are not limited to:

- TWU has used our 2016 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report to develop voting goals and will continue to use NSLVE to evaluate our voter participation progress. The 2018 NSLVE report will be able to assist us in identifying additional areas for improvement on our campus. We will continue to work towards a campus with greater voter participation.
- Data collection for voter registration numbers will be counted each time there is a tabling or other voter registration event.
- Participation rates and participant program evaluations will be collected for each educational event.

Evaluations will be collected and analyzed by the Civic Engagement Task Force and used to inform our future efforts.