



TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY™

CIVIC LEARNING AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN FOR

VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, AND ENGAGEMENT

2022-2023

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 and building on our community connections in 2022-2023, 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)
- TBA, 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
- Amy Evans, Director of Communication for Student Life
- Toby Wilkerson, Assistant Director of Civility and Community Standards
- TBA, Assistant Director for Diversity, Inclusion, & Outreach
- Delaney Farris-Dyer, Assistant Director for Civic Engagement
- Samuel Lindgren, Graduate Assistant for Civic Engagement
- 2 Andrew Goodman Foundation Student Ambassadors

- Alexa Hoekstra
- Fiana Villagrana-Ocasio
- 2 Campus Voter Project Democracy Fellows
 - Andy Hackett
 - D’Kerrington Traylor
- Rodney Jones, Social Change Peer Educator
- Student representatives from SGA, RHA, LULAC and Pi Sigma Alpha (Political Science Honorary)

The search processes to fill the Associate Director for the Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy and the Assistant Director of Diversity, Inclusion, and Outreach positions are currently underway and should be completed by mid-summer 2022.

Pioneers Vote Student Organization. Over the past two years, we have attempted to create a Civic Engagement Alliance, similar to the group at the University of Texas-Austin. CEA participation was very simple, organizations chose a rep to attend one meeting per month, registered the students in their organization to vote, and share nonpartisan voting information around election time. Unfortunately, our student organizations were not very receptive to the idea and found the identification and commitment of a student org member to this initiative daunting, both before and during the COVID 19 pandemic. For 2022-2023, we will be exploring the option of creating a student organization called Pioneers Vote under the leadership of our 2 Andrew Goodman Fellows and our 2 Democracy Fellows in hopes that students with a civic engagement passion will find an opportunity to be part of our civic engagement initiatives.

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”. 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, “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. Due to COVID 19, the TWU Strategic Plan has been extended to 2023.

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 2021 total student enrollment at Texas Woman’s University was 16,338 students. Denton serves as our main campus with a Fall 2021 enrollment of over 13,666 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 (HSI) with 28.3% 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. Pioneer Votes is our branded, institution-wide voter registration initiative. The Assistant Director for Civic Engagement, our Andrew Goodman Student Ambassadors, and our Democracy Fellows coordinate the calendar for voter registration tables, including coordinating with outside entities to host voter registration tables at no charge. We collaborate with the Denton County Board of Elections to host a Voter Registration Deputy training twice yearly on the TWU campus.

Voter Education. The Civic Engagement Task Force coordinates the Pioneer Votes 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. .

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. Conversations are commencing with the Denton County Board of Elections to get a polling site for early voting for 2022 Midterm 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, instead of a particular political affiliation, so we focus on issues-based education as well as voter registration/education.

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 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%.

As we look forward to 2022, 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.

Long Term Goals (2022 & 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 (2022-2023)

We are excited to re-build the momentum from our 2018 civic engagement efforts now that we have emerged from COVID, and to focus on what we have learned. For the short term, we are focused on the 2022 Midterm election. The goals are:

- To increase our 2018 Midterm Voting Rate by 9 points, from 48.3% to 60.0%.
- To increase our 2018 Midterm Registration Rate by 5 points, from 76.5% to 80%.
- To increase our 2018 Midterm Rate of Registered Students who Voted from 63.1% to 75%

Strategy

Here are some of our strategies for 2022-2023 that feed into our long-term goals:

Student-led initiative. TWU has recently partnered with The Andrew Goodman Foundation, which allows us to have 2 student interns. We have also been invited by the Campus Voting Project to host two Democracy Fellows again for the 2022-2023 academic year. Our four interns will coordinate a renewed classroom presentation initiative, help us build the Pioneer Votes student organization, coordinate the voter registration deputy training, etc.

“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 Women in Politics & Public policy to be able to attend new faculty orientation.

Campus and Community Connections. We will continue to build on our community connections with the Denton County Board of Elections through the exploration of TWU as a polling site. We also hope to rebuild 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 emerge from COVID 19 isolations, so re-building stronger connections with our Residence Hall Association, Student Union Programming, the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Outreach, and Student Government Association will be a goal.

Here are our strategies for 2022-2023 to meet our short-term goals:

Voter Registration. In addition to voter registration tables during key campus events, Constitution Day, and National Voter Registration Day, we will be adding emphasis to the last week of voter registration, tabling events during summer and fall orientations and welcome back week(s), and student organization and athletic teams’ voter registration. We will also translate our voter registration information/educational publicity into Spanish.

Voter Education. Our AGF and Democracy Fellow interns have updated our “First Vote” presentation, as well as a “What’s On The Ballot?” presentation, which will be incorporated into our UNIV 1231 class (first-year seminar). They have also created a “What’s On The Ballot?” social media PR campaign. Upcoming election information will include relevant dates and be widely disseminated. In October 2022, the student body will be voting in a referendum regarding an athletic fee, so voter education will also focus on campus elections. Other events, such as debate watch parties, are currently in the planning stages.

Voter Access. Although we’ve reengaged in conversations with Denton County Board of Elections to have an early voting site on campus for the 2022 Midterm Elections, we still plan on having several “Walk to the Polls” events.

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 2020 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 as it pertains specifically to Midterm elections. 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.