



The Pennsylvania State University 2020 Action Plan

Developed by: Tim Balliett

Executive Summary:

The action plan was developed by Tim Balliett, Director of the Center for Character, Conscience, and Public Purpose and coordinator of the PSU Votes initiative responsible for voter registration, voter education, and get out the vote activities for the University. The PSU Votes advisory group (listed below) provided feedback on the drafting and implementation of the plan. The plan will be implemented across all 23 physical campuses and one online campus. (Penn State Williamsport - Penn College, was not included, as they have their own independent plan and efforts.) The action plan covers Fall 2019-Fall 2020. The plan was significantly altered due to COVID-19, students not being present for the primaries, and uncertainty whether they would be present for the general election (even if the academic year started in-person). The topline short-term goal was minimizing student enfranchisement due to the COVID epidemic. The topline long-term goal was increasing collaboration with the non-UP campus, particularly the student governments and Directors of Student Affairs.

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following:

Tim Balliett, Director, Center for Character, Conscience, and Public Purpose and Coordinator of PSU Votes; Rosa Eberly, Associate Professor of Rhetoric, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Dept. of Communication Arts and Sciences, Associate Professor Dept. of English, Director of Intercollegiate Minor in Civic and Community Engagement; Jessica O'Hara, Associate Teaching Professor in Communication Arts and Sciences; Grace Harnett, Executive Director of Civic Engagement, University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA); Noah Robertson, UPUA; Alex Zhao, President, Graduate and Professional Student Association; Matthew Soska, Secretary, Penn State College Republicans; Jacob Klipstein, President, Penn State College Democrats; Kareem Elsergany, Governmental Affairs Director, Council of Commonwealth Student Governments; Avinash Bakshi, President, Penn State College Independents; Nyla Holland, President, Penn State Black Student Caucus; Mindy Krause, Interim Director, Penn State Student Affairs Communication and Marketing; Sarabeth Bowmaster, President, Penn State League of Women Voters

Commitment:

Our campus has signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

Our campus has used the following methods to communicate with students about the election:

By email, By mail, By posting on institutional social media channels, Penn State Today and Student Affairs news articles; University Open Forum on the election with University administrators, PSU Votes staff and students

Landscape:

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Our NSLVE data for 2016 and 2018 were not broken out by campus. Our 2016 metrics: 79.4% registered, 71.1% registered students voted, and 56.4% of eligible students voted. In 2018, 75.2% registered, 48.4%

of registered students voted, and 36.4% eligible students voted. In Fall 2020, Penn State has 89,816 students across 23 campuses and one online campus. Undergraduates compose 83%, males 53%, Whites 64%, international students 10%, Latinos 8%, Asians 7%, Black/African Americans 6%, adult learners 19%, and PA residents 61% of the total student population.

Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

Short term (2020) goals: Develop nimble plans based on whether and when the University or one or more campuses goes fully remote due to COVID-19 surges. Limit disenfranchisement of student voters due to potential location when said surges occur. Increase broader Penn State community representation in PSU Votes leadership. Increase direct communication to students on registration and voting information. Increase voter participation by 10% over 2016. Long term (2022) goals: Integrate campuses more fully in PSU Votes planning and execution. Increase PSU Votes physical presence on the campuses. Increase voter participation by 20% over 2018.

Strategy:

Our campus has used the following strategies and organized the following events:

In-person voter registration drives, In-person voter education events (e.g. film screenings, debates, lecture series, etc.), Classroom voter registration presentations (in-person or virtual), Virtual voter registration drives (e.g. Couch Party text banking events), Virtual voter education events (e.g. film screening, debates, lectures series, etc.)

The fundamental strategy was developing a nimble plan to avoid voter disenfranchisement during the COVID-19 pandemic. PA instituted mail-in voting this year, but mail-in ballots cannot be forwarded. Thus we had two plans, namely, one if the University needed to go fully remote prior to October 1, and the other should we be on-campus after October 1. The first plan focused on registration at students' permanent home locations and the second on their school locations or mail-in balloting at their permanent home locations. Since the traditional surge in voter registration at University Park did not occur, and we were still on campus on October 1 (but not permitted to table or hold events in-person), we modified our second plan to emphasize mail-in balloting for those who did not change or registered at home and registration at their current location with early voting or mail-in balloting preferred due to the COVID-19 spikes on our campuses. Thus our communications plan shifted to four direct emails (one per week) from University administration starting the first week of October, creating a PSU Votes icon on our popular GOPSU app; increasing the digital, social media, and web presence of PSU Vote; increasing voter registration and mail-in balloting webinars in courses and student organization meetings; utilizing MotoVote for campuses and student organizations' registration drive competitions; and holding a town hall with University administrators on the changes in voting in PA. Additionally, we more directly engaged the Directors of Student Affairs and Council of Commonwealth Student Governments to provide resources and support on the campuses. We created a speakers series on the upcoming election, including Noah Feldman and Michael Sandel. We provided a voter assistance center from October 1-November 3, worked with Centre County to create a voting precinct for University Park, a satellite elections office at the Bryce Jordan Center on campus, and move voting to the BJC for the campus precinct and the Hetzel Union Building (HUB) for our residential apartments precinct. University Park Undergraduate Association created the Department for Civic Engagement which included student voting fellows and direct coordination with the PSU Votes efforts. Met with all college

deans and campus Chancellors, vice provosts, and assistant/associate deans to discuss PSU Votes, coordination of efforts and communication.

NSLVE:

The Pennsylvania State University has authorized NSLVE.

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

The NSLVE data will be our primary metrics, since all of communication and efforts were virtual this year.

Reporting:

We will report our campus action plan and NSLVE reports in the following ways:

Our action plan will be shared with Student Affairs administration, PSU Votes leadership/advisory committee. Summary voting statistics will be shared on our website and via press releases.