



vote everywhere

THE **ANDREW GOODMAN** FOUNDATION

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Executive Summary

The following action plan guides Vote Everywhere UA's continued advancement of The Andrew Goodman Foundation's mission at The University of Alabama. Developed by UA's 2024-25 AGF Ambassadors, this plan outlines the progress made by our chapter of Vote Everywhere and establishes accountability for achieving our goals and strategies moving forward. Our university is uniquely situated as a state school with a majority out-of-state student body. This plan details ongoing efforts to make UA a voter-friendly campus for students, regardless of their home state. Additionally, this action plan includes our goals for improving voter engagement beyond our campus. As a campus within the Deep South, a region with a long legacy of voter suppression, the work outlined in this plan aims to support equitable and accessible voter engagement in the Tuscaloosa community and throughout the state of Alabama.

The timeline for action follows the academic year of the University of Alabama. It begins with the start of classes on August 21st, 2024 and ends on April 25th, 2025. Updates to the plan will be made after the Fall 2024 semester. This action plan will be implemented by the AGF Ambassadors as well as the Vote Everywhere UA team.

Landscape

Leadership

Our chapter of Vote Everywhere has been lucky; interest in voting rights and civic engagement has allowed us to expand Vote Everywhere beyond an Ambassador team and into a fully-fledged club. We currently have 45 members, including Ambassadors. Our membership allows us to have a broader reach on campus and diverse perspectives within the team. It also allows us to select Ambassadors with vested interest and experience with the mission of AGF. Each year, current club members apply for the role and are then interviewed by the Campus Champion and current Ambassadors. This process ensures the best possible candidates are chosen to be Ambassadors.

Commitment

Crossroads Civic Engagement Center works to improve our institutional commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement (CLDE). Due to this institutional support, UA Vote Everywhere has been able to include a link to TurboVote on several campus pages including mySource, a site for on-campus involvement, and in our campus portal, myBama. Our Capstone Creed specifies the need to “foster individual and civic responsibility” within the University. The work we do with Crossroads reciprocally benefits the University’s values, while aiding our institutionalization efforts. This partnership fosters a culture of voter and civic engagement across campus and the Tuscaloosa community.

NSLVE

Between 2016 and 2020, The University of Alabama increased its registration and voter rates. In 2016, only 80.3% of students were registered and approximately 49% overall actually participated in the general election. However, in 2020, UA's registration increased to 87.9%, and 64% of its students cast a ballot.

While this 64% voting rate does fall slightly below the 66% institutional average across the county, it exceeds Alabama's overall youth voter turnout rate of 47% according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University.

When further analyzing the NSLVE data, we find that our students typically vote by absentee ballot. This fact may be attributed to the fact that over 50% of those enrolled are from out-of-state. Surprisingly, over 1,000 students voted early in the 2016 or 2020 election despite the State of Alabama having no early voting process. These findings indicate that most of our students are either unwilling or unable to vote in person on Election Day. This deduction leads us to believe in the importance of providing absentee ballots and their applications to students.

As we prepare for the 2024 general election, the noticeable decline in youth voter participation between the 2018 and 2022 midterm elections has influenced our strategy. We plan to continue offering successful services like absentee ballot resources. We also plan to focus on the types of students and majors who traditionally have lower rates of voter turnout (ie: mathematics, physical science, engineering, and computer and information sciences). We also continue to plan programming events with existing student organizations and departments to ensure we are reaching a wide range of students and helping them to form their voting plans to see an increase in our turnout number.

Partnerships

We have many active partners on our campus. Our long-time partners include the Political Science department and various divisions of the Student Government Association. We have partnered with several student-led organizations including the Black Student Union, Leading Women of Tomorrow, League of Women Voters, the Blackburn Institute, the Hispanic Latino Association, and several Greek life organizations. With each partnership, we strive to establish or maintain our relationships to broaden our reach at our expansive university. We have begun plans for programming events hosted with our partners, such as Boba and Ballots with the Greek Programming Board, Voting Matters Week with our SGA, and Bama Jam Tabling, which involves SGA making t shirts to give away at our annual weeks of welcome concert that we will table at to register students to vote.

Resources

In the past, we developed a website (vote.ua.edu) that contains a link to TurboVote and different educational resources. Our website allows us to continuously update with current voter information and new election guides. We have worked with organizations, such as the Hispanic Latino Association to develop a Spanish voting guide for the website. Our partnership with Crossroads Civic Engagement Center makes this possible, and we are thankful that they promote our materials to incoming students, parents, and current students who are active within the center. In the Spring 2024 semester, ambassadors filmed videos explaining how to register to vote and request absentee ballots. These videos are uploaded in our “faculty resources” page, along with syllabus addendums that

professors can use in their syllabi to discuss their election day off policies. In the upcoming school year, we hope to continue to update these resources, especially with the creation of a “student resources” page.

Our Instagram also serves as a great resource that is widely accessed by the student population. We post educational resources and links to our website, and highlight ongoing initiatives to inform our followers of what our club is doing.

Institutionalization

We have a strong partnership with institutional departments, such as UA Crossroads Civic Engagement Center, Student Government Association, and the Blackburn Institute. Through these partnerships, we have been able to institutionalize our work into the student experience. We have worked with Crossroads to gain a website (vote.ua.edu) that we use to regularly update with resources to help students stay civically engaged while on campus. The link to this website has been embedded into our campus student portal, which broadens its reach. Since it is a UA domain, the University of Alabama works with us to maintain the website. We have also been partnering “Bama Bound,” which is our orientation for new students. These orientations allowed us to table and get new students registered to vote. We have created a video that can be shown to incoming students and are currently in the process of meeting with orientation staff to see if this video can be shown during the orientation. Currently, the video and our website are only linked in a resources document that is sent out to students and parents.

Programming

Throughout the years, we have maintained several tabling events that have been successful here on campus, most notably our annual National Voter Registration Day Celebration. For the past three years, we have hosted a day-long, campus-wide registration drive. Our tables are at several locations across campus, so this event often garners the most attention from students as well as the University.

We also make a point to host at least one speaker series each year. In the past, we have hosted panels discussing felony disenfranchisement or the effects of redistricting. These panels have hosted speakers from Tuscaloosa and West Alabama, the Brennan Center, and even other universities. This past year, we hosted professors to discuss the language in SB 01 and break down the meaning of the new law. SB 01 was a bill in the 2024 Alabama legislative session that sought to criminalize absentee ballot application assistance in the state of Alabama. National Voter Registration and this speaker series are events that we plan to utilize permanently due to their strong success in the past. This upcoming year, we have planned several programming events aiming to “get out the vote” rather than simply just registering students. These events are planned with our campus partners to increase turnout among different student groups.

Achievements, Challenges, and Opportunities

Our chapter has had a strong presence on campus since its inception which means we have enjoyed a strong relationship with the administration. This relationship helped to achieve initiatives like removing the requirement to pay for on-campus mailing (which was essentially a poll tax for mail-in ballots). Also, we have also been able to integrate ourselves into the student portal, MyBama, to provide voter registration information.

We have been working on partnerships with different departments on campus to help us further grow these initiatives. As stated earlier, we plan to create an informational video that can be integrated into the freshman orientation materials. This video will make new students aware of how they can get registered to vote and the resources we have here on campus regardless of our members' physical presence in new student spaces.

The biggest challenge we have faced so far has been in our efforts to get Election Day off. This initiative has been years long, but it seems as though the administration waits for turnover on our team and hopes that the fight for it will fizzle out. We continue to work towards election day off but are met with resistance from our administration. We have created the syllabus addendums and have done outreach to different faculty members to allow them to know about this option.

Being in the South, there are a large number of voter suppression bills that are placed on the docket each legislative session. Unfortunately this year, one passed. We quickly had to pivot to advocacy work and worked with the University of Alabama's legal team to determine if we were in accordance with the new law. This can be very demoralizing to our team and our work, when we are unexpectedly

confronted with these issues from our state government. We are determined to bounce back stronger this year, but this is a challenge we face.

Goals

Long-term goals

What is the long-term vision your campus hopes to achieve?

At the University of Alabama, we hope to see further administrative changes that support student voting. Currently, the Alabama legislature has proposed bills that would disadvantage student voters and organizations like ourselves. For example, the legislature has proposed bills that criminalize assistance with absentee ballots. To help combat this sentiment, we are working to strengthen our administrative support on campus. We want to enact change to make our campus voting friendly, regardless of the current climate of the state. We are Alabama's flagship university, and can set a powerful precedent of institutional support for civic and democratic engagement. We hope our work continues to inspire and uplift youth engagement within our campus, state, and nation.

What are the outcomes your campus wants to accomplish?

Some long-term goals we hope to accomplish are getting election day off and making voting resources easily accessible to all freshmen entering the University of Alabama. All of these goals support student voter participation on campus.

Election Day Off has been an effort of our chapter for years, and an initiative that we do not plan to stop pursuing. This year, we hope to gain faculty support to

display to the administration the widespread support this idea has with university employees.

We hope to continue to create a culture of civic engagement at our campus, where it becomes built in our campus culture. We hope to do this so one day our work no longer is needed. We do this by continuing outreach, especially intentional recruitment for our organization to target other majors, besides political science and history, to show that voting is important for everyone.

Short-term goals

- Maintaining connections with Campaign Legal Center and GBM
- Continuing and growing our class presentations
- Hosting 20 tabling events
- Partnering with at least 5 new campus organizations /departments
- Creating informational sheets for every statewide election
- Making progress on, or getting, Election Day Off!
- Creating relationships with other Vote Everywhere chapters
- Engaging further with AGF at an organizational level
- Creating a more robust internal structure, with the addition of “coordinator” positions

Many of our goals this year center around maintaining or growing the initiatives we have already created in previous years. This will allow us to keep important relationships, while focusing our time and resources into getting Election Day Off in time for the 2024 Election cycle.

Our campus is lucky to have very high registration rates due to the work of Vote Everywhere in past years. To reach an even larger percentage of students, we

must focus on the freshman students since they are the group most likely to be unregistered.

Strategy

Long-Term Goal Strategies

How might your campus deepen capacity and competence related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in tandem with civic learning and democratic engagement?

UA Vote Everywhere strives to deepen our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in all the work that we do. Our campus is situated in the Deep South and has a rich civil rights history; we acknowledge and remember those who have fought for rights to vote and have/continue to engage in this form of activism. This acknowledgment and contextual recognition informs our value of partnering with an array of on and off campus organizations. We want to make sure that students are being reached, informed of voting resources, and armed with the knowledge of collegiate civic engagement and sharing their voices. We want to continue to honor the legacies of Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman. We will do this by continuing to tell their stories. We traveled to Neshoba County last year and hope to return again and make it a recurring trip to remind ourselves of our commitment and honor their sacrifices.

What will it take to build toward sustained democratic engagement programming beyond a single election?

Our initiatives and long-term goals will build sustained democratic engagement because we will show the campus the substantial work left to be done

in the community. Crossroads Civic Engagement Center also asks for our assistance in programming. We are working together for a November civic engagement event that will discuss the dangers facing civic life (voter apathy, misinformation, etc) and how to mitigate them. We also make an effort to digitize our work and our mistakes even so the students who come after us can continue to pick up right where we left off. This includes programming and engaging with students beyond midterms and presidential elections.

How will you know this strategy has been institutionalized?

Our campus partner, Crossroads Civic Engagement Center, has helped us to institutionalize our mission because their work also aims to make the University of Alabama more voter friendly. We are grateful for their support as they assist us with programming, and plan to continue this sustainable partnership moving forward.

On what timeline will the strategy be implemented?

We will conduct check-ins with our Campus Champion and the ambassador team, as well as invite general club members to work on these initiatives with us. We plan to assess and record the success of each initiative to improve future projects.

Short-Term Goal Strategies

The strategies will need to be implemented by our Ambassador team and assisted by our general club team. We are lucky enough to have a large team of passionate students who represent diverse areas of campus, which allows us to

grow our reputation across campus each year. This reach allows us to spread the word across campus quickly and receive support for various projects from different student populations across campus.

Many of our registration efforts will be targeted toward freshmen, either through our class presentations or our registration drives. This strategy reaches the group most likely to be unregistered right when they come to campus. This strategy will also be realized through integrating Vote Everywhere information via a video into the New Student Orientation, Bama Bound.

One reason this strategy will be effective is because of our broad campus reach. We employ nuanced strategies depending on the targeted audience, department or organization. This informational tailoring is assisted by our members who are familiar with best practices for communicating in their niche of campus. Further, by integrating ourselves with the Bama Bound process, we establish a strong tie with the University at large, as well as with a key department as they focus on the needs of freshmen.

Tactics and Timeline

Events

- Bama Jam Tabling
- National Voter Registration Day
- Voting Matters Week
- Vote Early Day
- Boba and Ballots
- Absen-teaching

Actions

- Election Day Off Syllabus Addendum
- Why We Vote Social Media Campaign
- Live the Legacy Social Media Campaign

Meetings

- We have weekly meetings with the Ambassadors to ensure that we are all on the same page for the team meeting and work to be accomplished in the coming weeks.
- We have weekly meetings with our full team
- We are always meeting with some administrators on campus about how we can further expand our reach.

- We correspond with student organizations and our community partners roughly once a week to either plan another event or simply to maintain our relationship with them.
- We have Ambassadors working within the Crossroads Civic Engagement Center that maintain our partnership with them.

Digital Organizing

Our avenues for digital organizing have changed over the years. In the past we have utilized tools like SimpleTexting or relied on my.VoteEverywhere, but our campus landscape has forced us to move away from these tools. We use our own website vote.ua.edu to update with materials, as a “ua.edu” address gives more credibility with our institutions’ administrators, professors, and students. We primarily use our Instagram DM feature to answer questions, as we found more people are willing to DM the account than text. Multiple Ambassadors have the account login and the ability to answer questions, which ensures response times remain reasonable.

Reporting

Alongside the Andrew Goodman Foundation at large, The University of Alabama Vote Everywhere chapter champions transparency in all of our plans, events, and initiatives. With this goal in mind, we have always been open to share our data, expertise, and future goals when requested or needed.

As a team, The University of Alabama Vote Everywhere chapter utilizes our NSLVE reports to determine our areas of success and needed improvement as we prepare for each election cycle. The highlights from these reports are traditionally shared with general members of our student organization to identify what changes we can make and what new initiatives will best serve our goals.

We also use the NSLVE reports as evidence to support our initiatives; something that is particularly helpful when confronted with opposition. In the past, NSLVE report findings have been shared with the University of Alabama Administration and *the Crimson White*, our student newspaper, as evidence of the need for election day off, a campaign our chapter continues to pursue.

In addition to this data, we also share our action plan with the rest of our team and, at times, our campus and community partners to keep us accountable and assist in coalition building for larger campaigns.

As we begin the 2024-2025 year, we are mindful of the recent drop in youth voter engagement as well as the impending primary and general presidential elections. In order to reach as many students and young voters as possible, we understand that maintaining transparency and cultivating relationships are the key to our success. Thus, it is imperative for us to continue sharing our viewpoints, data, and goals with as many as possible.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Meetings

Our campus team will have meetings weekly on Sundays. These meetings will serve as times to plan our club meeting, check in as an Ambassador team, and provide updates monitoring some of our ongoing efforts.

- We will schedule additional meetings as needed to update plans for long-term initiatives and to work on one-off event planning.
- We will meet at the end of the fall semester to assess failures and successes. This evaluation will allow us to update our goals and strategies for the spring semester.

Event Reports

- We will track attendance among UAVE members at weekly meetings and special events in a centralized folder.
- We will store all logistical information for any given event in a centralized folder.
- Each event will have an event coordinator. They will be responsible for reporting all information related to their event.

NSLVE

We have received our 2022 NSLVE report from our faculty advisor. We have confirmed that our campus has given approval and a report for our campus will be generated. We already have NSLVE reports from 2016, 2018, and 2020.

- We were not as pleased with our metrics from our 2022 NSLVE report, but we are working to continue to engage in more “get out the vote” events to hopefully increase our numbers this next year.
- We will make our NSLVE report available on our website.

Research

We will use TurboVote data to determine the efficacy of our various tabling events.

- We will survey UAVE team members to gather feedback on the effectiveness of our various tactics.
- We will survey freshmen on campus to better understand the effect of our voter engagement strategies and the needs of our campus population.
- We will consult faculty members for advice and feedback on our efforts to make Election day a campus holiday.

Continuous Evaluation

We will review our Campus Action plan in late October or early November 2024 to determine any minor adjustments that can improve our operations

- We will review our Campus Action plan in early January to determine any major changes to our goals or tactics for the Spring 2025 semester.
- We will review our Campus Action plan in early March of 2025 to determine any minor adjustments that can improve our operations the rest of the year.