

UCLA Voter Engagement Action Plan

Executive Summary:

This action plan was developed in October 2019 by the BruinsVote Coalition to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at UCLA. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over the next year from Fall 2019 through Fall 2020 on and around our campus in Los Angeles, CA. This plan will be implemented by the BruinsVote Coalition recruited by the current coalition leadership comprised of USAC EVP office, GSA EVP office, CALPIRG Students, and the Deputy Director of Campus Life in the Office of Student Affairs in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize UCLA's commitment to civic learning democratic engagement and youth participation in elections.

Leadership:

The leadership of the BruinsVote Coalition is made up of student groups and administrators, specifically CALPIRG at UCLA's New Voters Project, the Undergraduate Student Associated Council External Vice President's Office (USAC EVP office), Graduate Student Association's External Vice President's Office and the UCLA Office of Student Affairs. The 2019-2020 student co-directors of the coalition are Elisa Chang, the CALPIRG Students New Voter's Project Coordinator, and Josh Avila, the USAC EVP office's BruinsVote director, and the administrative director is Karen Hedges, the Deputy Director of Campus Life. These student director positions are filled each year by CALPIRG and the EVP offices, all of which are committed to appointing successors each election cycle, including for Fall 2020.

The Coalition will also include multiple student organizations on campus, faculty, the Office of Residential Life, the Center for Community Learning, and the Daily Bruin campus newspaper. In order to promote civic engagement in all campus communities and have a diverse coalition, outreach is done to a variety of student organizations, including historically marginalized communities. Current groups in the coalition include: the Asian Pacific Coalition, Vietnamese Student Union, and African Education Project. We will continue to recruit different cultural groups on campus to target underrepresented voices in the political process.

The BruinsVote Coalition has an ongoing relationship with the LA County Registrar's office and has been coordinating since past election cycles, mainly through the Deputy Director. Furthermore, The Coalition has the support of campus administration through the Office of Student Affairs, including the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Monroe Gorden Jr.

The Coalition will meet monthly (or more often, if needed) leading up to the primaries and bi-weekly (or more often, if needed) leading up to the presidential elections. CALPIRG and the

EVP offices both recruit new students to their organizations each quarter, which will be the primary method of recruiting new volunteers to the coalition, as well as all of the student organizations in the coalition will recruit their members to volunteer with the coalition.

Commitment:

In regards to civic learning and democratic engagement, our campus mission statement mentions education, research, service, and civic engagement as fundamental to our mission as a public university. Our campus values are integrity, excellence, accountability, respect, and service, and our principles of community highlight the value of diversity and inclusion. Our campus strategic plan mentions a commitment to civic engagement, inclusion, and education. We can point to the above institutional commitments to support our work. We have seen aspects of democratic engagement in our campus culture, through political clubs, campus leaders promoting voting, voter registration tables and National Voter Registration Day events, on campus polling places, and protests. However the emphasis on civic learning could definitely be increased, especially voter education through resources for election information and including civic learning into the educational curriculum. Additionally, the University of California has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of California Secretary of State's Office to promote and implement practices to foster student voter registrations and voting. The Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Monroe Gordon Jr., and other senior administrators are committed to civic engagement and civic education, and have co-hosted campus events with the BruinsVote Coalition and sent out official all campus emails. We will continue these efforts to display this commitment to the campus and broader community.

Landscape:

Based on official data from UCLA, our campus has 45,921 students enrolled, and 12% of undergraduate students are international students. The report for our campus from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement for the 2018 election shows that we had a registration rate of 77.4% and a voting rate of 44.5%. In 2016, 77.2% of UCLA students were registered to vote and 52% voted. During this year (2019) our voting and registration rate increased, and were higher than the national average. Our voting rate was shown to have increased by 300% since the previous midterm election in 2014. Our focus on peer to peer voter registration and get out the vote drives, as well the institutional commitments to have a centralized polling place and send all campus emails with our voter registration link were some of the biggest strengths from 2018 that we want to carry into 2020.

However, some departments had much lower rates of voting, with 22% of computer science majors, 29% of engineering majors, and 21% of math majors. We face challenges in engaging

these specific departments, especially through academic avenues. While we had an increase in turnout, we also strive to affect the campus culture around voting to further improve.

Our strengths in the coming year include an experienced leadership team and good relationships throughout campus, student organizations focused on peer-to-peer registration efforts, and our success the previous year in bringing a vote center to campus where anyone can same-day register and conditionally vote.

Goals:

Our short term goals are to establish regular meetings of our BruinsVote coalition and outreach to all campus stakeholders to join our coalition, help register 500 students to vote by the March primary elections and 2,500 by the general elections. Through these tactics we want to reach a registration rate of 85% of eligible students. Additionally, we'll work to increase use of early voting options. We want to increase turnout from math, computer science, and engineering majors to be on par with the average turnout for all majors. We will do this by continuing to recruit STEM student groups into the BruinsVote coalition, and will reach out to in-residence STEM faculty that already work closely with undergraduate students to continue engaging these students on campus. We also want to increase cultural awareness of the importance of voting through educating students on a peer to peer level.

In Fall 2020, we want to have 60% of students turn out to vote, compared to 44.5% in 2018 and 52% in 2016. Our long term goals are to establish permanent funding and space reservations for the Vote Center, to ensure we can have one on campus for all future elections, incorporate civic engagement in campus curriculum through permanent democracy classes and faculty buy-in, and establish connections with community organizations on campus to bring inclusivity and create a campus culture of voting. The ultimate goal is to create a climate in which virtually all students register, become informed voters, and vote on a regular basis.

Strategy:

Our strategy involves several components: Institutionalization, Public Information Campaign, and Peer-to-Peer Registration and, finally, Get Out The Vote work.

On the institutionalization side, we have worked to bring a Vote Center to campus, where students, faculty, staff, and community members all have one centralized polling place that also serves as a same-day registration and conditional voting site. We have also incorporated the StudentVote.org registration website into the course registration website (MyUCLA.edu), which is designed by students to better facilitate online voter registration and allows students to opt in

to sharing their contact information and receiving nonpartisan election information. We are also incorporating institutionalization efforts into campus welcome events such as transfer student orientation, graduate student orientation, freshmen orientation, move-in, and other events on campus.

On a more direct campus engagement level, we will focus on thoroughly embedding voting into the campus climate by doing outreach to cultural groups (and other student populations that have traditionally been underrepresented at UCLA), and reaching out to faculty/departments that show low turnout rate from the NSLVE report, such as the STEM departments.

For the Public Information Campaign, the goal is to inform students about the aforementioned systems to make voter registration and voting easier as well as messaging regarding why voting matters. This campaign involves crafting messages for new or incoming students about voting at UCLA through the New Student and Transfer Orientation, including a unit in the orientation sessions and an informational flyer in the orientation packet. It also involves the student friendly website BruinsVote.ucla.edu that includes information on voter registration, election education, reliable external sites of voter information, a video on the importance of voting, and where to vote at UCLA. Another aspect of this campaign is a campus-wide email from university leaders to encourage voting, and student to student reminder emails and texts on Election Day. There will also be special targeting towards groups which have historically low registration and voter turnout such as: Engineering, Physical Sciences, Computer Science and, perhaps, students from particular socioeconomic or race/ethnic origins who are less likely to vote. These groups will be determined with feedback from student groups and data.

Regarding the on-the-ground voter registration and get out the vote campaign, CALPIRG Students and the EVP offices will lead student groups in the BruinsVote Coalition in peer to peer registration efforts, which have been proven to be one of the most effective ways to engage students. Regardless of whether the fall quarter is online, virtual, or hybrid, we plan to increase vote by mail for students who live on or near campus. Our focus is on UCLA students registering and voting in the district where they live and go to school (on or near to campus) rather than at their previous home or permanent address. Since this is the area that students spend the majority of their time, this will help first time voters get into the habit of updating their registration address and also allow students to vote on the issues that are most relevant to them locally and personally. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of California will be sending all registered voters a vote-by-mail ballot. Therefore, the BruinsVote Coalition will work to educate students on how to properly register and utilize vote by mail, as well as ensure students who don't register by the registration deadline can still find a way to safely cast their vote through same-day conditional voting on election day. Vote by mail (VBM) requires preparing for elections far in advance, requesting a VBM ballot for their new address, retrieving said ballot from the mail,

completing the ballot, and sending it back on time. Many students find this difficult to do. Many students are also relocated due to COVID-19, so we will work to run an education campaign and embed voter information into campus communications to make sure all students have the information they need to know in order to register as well as how to safely cast their ballot regardless of their living situation. However, the campaign will be inclusive to provide information and assistance for any student who is eligible to vote to determine how and whether to provide students who want to vote in their home state or district, information and assistance in doing so. Student groups will also lead on the ground efforts to “Get Out The Vote” and mobilize students to vote and provide nonpartisan election information, and to help students who opted into providing their contact information through the CAsStudentVote website or through in person pledges to vote make their plan to get to the polls.

Reporting:

We will share our campus action plan and most recent NSLVE data on our vote coalition website (bruinsvote.ucla.edu), with our coalition partners, and with the organizations we work with such as the PAC-12 Challenge, All In Challenge, NASPA’s Voter Friendly Campus, and the StudentPIRGs New Voters Project. We will share the data and reports by releasing them to the campus newspaper (which is read by both members of the campus community and the general public), coalition meetings, as well as hosting a press conference once the results of the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) are released for our campus.

Evaluation:

We also have an evaluation system to measure our success and inform future plans. In addition to utilizing results from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), we will conduct two anonymous web or phone-based surveys of a random sample of students about whether they are aware of the new voter registration tool available, whether they have registered online or in some other way, and whether they intend to vote. The first survey will be conducted in the first week of Fall quarter and the second will be conducted right before the November election. Second, we will identify measures we can use to determine how many students registered and voted. Ideas include: (1) adding a button on the MyUCLA voter registration portal that lets students indicate “I have already registered to vote” in order to improve accuracy of voter registration totals, (2) adding a counter on the MyUCLA portal which counts the number of voter registrations completed and submitted, and (3) conducting exit poll surveys to collect data from voters on their majors at UCLA to measure voting by major, school, and unit.