

UCLA Voter Engagement Action Plan - 2022

Executive Summary:

This action plan was developed in August 2022 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 from September through November 2022 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 2022-2023 student co-directors of the coalition are Christian Nelson, the CALPIRG Students New Voter's Project Coordinator; Krezzia Basilio, Student Affairs' Civic Engagement Communications Director; and Carmen Le, the USAC EVP office's Director of Civic Engagement. 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.

The Coalition will also include multiple student organizations on campus, faculty, the Office of Residential Life, the Center for Community Learning, the Daily Bruin campus newspaper, and all Student Affairs offices (Graduate Student Resource Center, Bruin Resource Center, LGBTQ Resource Center, UCLA Athletics, and more). 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 and the Mother Organizations (MOs). Current groups in the coalition include the Black Bruin Resource Center, the Vietnamese Student Union, and MECHa de UCLA. 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 Karen Hedges, Deputy Director of Campus Life, as well as other members of the administration and faculty.

The Coalition will meet bi-weekly (or more often, if needed) leading up to the midterm election. CALPIRG and the EVP offices both recruit students to their organizations each quarter, which will be the primary method of recruiting volunteers to the coalition. Additionally, all student organizations involved in the coalition will recruit their members to volunteer for civic engagement efforts.

Commitment:

In regard to civic learning and democratic engagement, our campus mission statement mentions education, research, service, and civic engagement is 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 Voter education events, on-campus polling locations, and protest/demonstrations. 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. Senior administration are committed to civic engagement and civic education. For instance, we have worked with members of the administration and faculty to integrate voter registration into our student portal; disseminate campus-wide emails encouraging voter registration and get out the vote; and tools to promote voting and civic engagement. 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 46,000 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled, and 10% of undergraduate students are international students. The report for our campus from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) 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. In 2019, the campus voting and registration rate were higher than the national average, seeing a 300% increase since the 2014 midterm election. Our focus on peer-to-peer voter registration is a consistent theme that we'd love to carry into 2022. However, for this election, our peer-to-peer efforts will likely be completed more on social media.

We hope to collaborate with student groups such as the Mother Organizations (MOs) to ensure that a broad range of views and identities are represented in our civic engagement efforts, materials, and audience. The EVP arm of BruinsVote has met with several MOs and resource centers on campus to discuss the potential for collaboration and input in order to reach all Bruins. We hope to encourage each group or resource center to provide voter resources and education—but with their own unique perspectives in order to speak to their respective constituencies.

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. We want to increase eligible student voter registration rates to 48% for the 2022 midterm election. Additionally, we'll work to increase awareness and 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 2022, we want to have 48% of students turn out to vote, compared to 76.6% in the 2020 presidential election and 44.5% in the 2018 midterm election. Our long-term goals are to increase the permanent funding and space reservations for voting centers on campus, incorporate civic engagement in the campus curriculum through permanent democracy classes and faculty buy-in, and establish connections with community organizations on campus to bring inclusivity and diversity of thought to voter registration and education efforts. The ultimate goal is to create a campus culture of voting in which virtually all students register to vote, 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 multiple Vote Centers to campus, where students, faculty, staff, and community members can all reach regardless of their residence or workplace. We have also incorporated voter registration into the course registration website (MyUCLA.edu). We now have a shortened, direct link allowing UCLA students to access the site directly (bruinsvote.myucla.edu). We are also incorporating institutionalization efforts into campus welcome events such as move-in, New Student Welcome, the Enormous Activities Fair, 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). We plan to place voter registration and education materials in spaces such as the Black Bruin Resource Center and Transfer Student Center.

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, which includes information on voter registration, election education, reliable external sites of voter information, and where to vote at UCLA. We will also use social media to encourage voting, using voter registration and education campaigns to encourage people to get involved. We will maintain a robust social media presence—@bruinsvote on Instagram and Twitter—collaborating with other student organizations to bring civic engagement to an even bigger (virtual) platform on campus. We plan to gamify voter registration by entering UCLA into the Ballot Bowl, a state-wide contest where California higher education campuses compete to see who can register the most student voters. For this initiative, we will encourage Bruins to complete their voter registration through MyUCLA.com in order for their registration to count.

Regarding the on-the-ground voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaign, CALPIRG Students and the EVP office 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. Our emphasis is on UCLA students registering and voting in the district where they live and go to school (on or near campus) rather than at their previous home or permanent address. Focusing on where students spend the majority of their time will help first-time voters get into the habit of updating their registration address, as well as allow students to vote on the issues that are most relevant to them locally and personally. To achieve this, we will target new students at move-in and other welcome events, reminding them to register or re-register to vote at their campus address.

There are also many out-of-state students that feel unaddressed by California- and Los Angeles-centric voter information, so we will run an education campaign and embed resources into social media and in-person communications to make sure all students have the information they need to know in order to register and cast their ballot regardless of where they are registered to vote.

Our campaigns will be inclusive and 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 make their plans 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 our partner organizations 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 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 NSLVE, we will track MyUCLA voter registration portal clickthroughs. We may also consider an option that lets students indicate "I have already registered to vote" in order to improve the accuracy of voter registration totals, as well as adding a counter on the MyUCLA portal which counts the number of voter registrations completed and submitted. Finally, we will accumulate and analyze data on voter rates via a database we are creating with faculty members. Through these three evaluation methods, we hope to paint a holistic picture of voter engagement at UCLA, as well as help inform all plans regarding campus democratic participation going forward.