

2024 UChicago All In Plan

Introduction:

This Action Plan was developed by the University of Chicago's Institute of Politics, specifically our Civic Engagement staff and UChiVotes student initiative, in order to guide the University's voter engagement work for the 2024 election season. The University of Chicago's voter engagement plans are developed and implemented by UChiVotes in collaboration with the Institute of Politics and members of the campus community.

These voter engagement activities serve the entire University of Chicago community including 7,500 undergraduate students ("The College") and 10,800 graduate students across our Hyde Park campus. UChiVotes leads the campus's peer-to-peer voter engagement work, including voter registration, education, ballot requesting, and Get Out The Vote (GOTV) work leading up to and including Election Day. The Institute of Politics' physical location ("The IOP House") also offers voting materials and educational information to the entire campus community.

While this plan covers our objectives and tactics for the 2024 election season, we are also working toward creating a culture of voting and democratic engagement on campus. In the short term, our primary goal is to improve UChicago student voter participation rates from the 2020 general election.

This Action Plan offers an overview of each of the following key areas:

- Leadership
- Commitment
- Landscape
- Goals
- Strategies and Activities
- Evaluation
- Reporting

Leadership:

The University of Chicago's voter engagement efforts are coordinated by the Institute of Politics and the IOP student group UChiVotes.

About the IOP and UChiVotes:

The non-partisan, extracurricular Institute of Politics is committed to fostering in our students a passion for public service and active engagement in our democracy. Through four key departments, we offer students many ways to engage in issues, gain public service experience, and begin their public service journeys. Our Speaker Series hosts political experts on campus through public, on-the-record conversations. Our Pritzker Fellows program brings former elected officials, journalists, pollsters, activists, and other practitioners to campus for quarter-long non-credit bearing seminar series for students. Our Career Development department sponsors academic-year and summer internships across a range of political and public service sectors. Lastly, our Civic Engagement department houses student groups, experiential treks, dialogue

programming, and our voter engagement work. All of our departments have opportunities for students to be involved, whether they have one hour to commit all year or 15 hours per week.

UChiVotes is a non-partisan student-run initiative within the Civic Engagement department of the Institute of Politics. The overarching goal of UChiVotes is to create a culture of voting and democratic engagement on campus. That starts with making sure every eligible student has the opportunity, information, and motivation to turn out to vote in every election. UChiVotes has three key components: voting ambassadors, communications, and outreach. Our voting ambassador team trains students to engage their peers in voting through tabling, textbanking, class announcements, and conversations. Our communications team utilizes online and physical platforms to provide information to the UChicago community, including key dates, how-tos, and testimonials. Our outreach team makes sure other messengers across campus - including Registered Student Organizations (RSOs), academic departments, housing and Residence Life, and student government - are sharing voting-related resources. These teams combined make up the UChiVotes community.

Campus and Community Partnerships

While we work to build a campus vote coalition, key individuals and departments on campus continue to support our work.

The University Student Centers host our on-campus early voting polling location. The University's dean of students sends out voting-related information to the entire campus community through all-campus emails. The Undergraduate Student Government sponsored and passed the UChiVote Act to improve campus-wide voter engagement. The Center for Leadership and Involvement includes a voter registration pop-up on the campus's student organization platform.

Additionally, individual professors, departments, and student organizations support voter engagement efforts. Notably, the Organization of Black Students, UChicago Hillel, University of Chicago College Democrats, and College Republicans have all worked with UChiVotes on individual events and programs.

Across Chicago, we work closely with the Cook County Board of Elections, ChicagoVotes, and the League of Women Voters.

Nationally, the University of Chicago participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), as well as the All In Campus Democracy Challenge. We are an Andrew Goodman Foundation campus, our staff is active in the Students Learn Students Vote coalition, and we utilize TurboVote as our voter engagement tool.

Commitment:

The University of Chicago has a demonstrated commitment to voter engagement and participation as well as a commitment to democratic engagement and public service.

The University has shown this commitment most notably with the Institute of Politics itself. Founded in 2013, the IOP reports directly to the University President's office. With support and engagement from the University administration, the IOP and UChiVotes' work is included in University communications and events.

Commitment from UChicago can also be seen in the creation and continuation of the on-campus early voting polling location in Reynolds Hall, the campus student center. For three days during early voting in each election, the on-campus polling location operates with the support of the campus community. Additionally, the dean of students, the Center for Leadership and Involvement, and the team programming first-year orientation have all provided space for voting-related communications. While the University's current President has not yet signed the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation, we are hopeful that we will become a signatory in the near future.

Landscape:

UChiVotes and IOP staff constantly evaluate and analyze our strategy and tactics to improve our work.

We have seen consistent growth of our voter registration and voter engagement numbers. While we have stayed consistent with the national student average, there is still room for growth in cultivating an institutional commitment to voter engagement.

Our strengths lie in a robust student engagement strategy. Our student group has been consistently successful at recruiting peers and creating organizing tactics that advance the goals of UChiVotes. We have strengthened our advising of UChivotes to create clear support for their training, outreach and communications efforts. Additionally, our previous successes include standing up a seasonal voter engagement coalition in 2020. This coalition partnered with UChicago Dining, the Dean of Students Office, and select graduate/professional schools to advance voter engagement. The pandemic stymied the efforts of our coalition and prevented us from fully realizing the early commitments institutional partners made. We failed to reprise the administrative coalition in our midterm elections in 2022 and instead focused on a student coalition and partnership with undergraduate student government. The University of Chicago comprises many schools and professional programs, and an area for growth in 2024 is bringing all of the administrative and professional programs into our coalition.

Past Efforts, Successes, and Areas for Growth

HISTORY OF UCHIVOTES

Broader Environment and Context

As a well-regarded institution in the Midwest, UChicago serves students from across the country. Students are encouraged to vote how and where they feel comfortable, whether in their home or Chicago communities. As a result, UChiVotes student leaders and voting ambassadors have to be familiar with voting information and resources for all 50 states. This can be a challenge, given various voter registration forms, mail-in ballot request forms, and deadlines.

Additionally, given the large and disparate graduate student population, many of our efforts have focused mostly on the undergraduate student population. We are continuing to address this issue to ensure voting-related information reaches the entire student population.

Timing of elections can also be a challenge given the University calendar. Illinois primary elections and Chicago municipal elections often fall around spring break. In federal election years, as UChicago is on the quarter system, there are typically only five or six weeks between when students arrive on campus for Fall Quarter in late September and the November election, shortening the time available for raising awareness and often limiting the success of turnout efforts, especially when so many students need to vote by mail and are thus facing voter registration and ballot request deadlines up to four weeks prior to Election Day.

The political climate is both a boon and a challenge to our voter engagement efforts. Students are motivated by certain issues that they feel passionate about, but the lack of progress on these issues is leading some students to feel disheartened. However, by focusing on down-ballot races and highlighting changes being made in local communities, we feel we can adequately address this.

Goals

Our short-term goal is to have higher voter participation from UChicago students compared to 2020's voting rates. Continuing to improve upon previous elections will help us achieve our larger goal of creating a robust culture of voting and democratic engagement across campus, and the only way we can continue to improve is by bringing along more campus partners and encouraging students from areas with lower voting rates to turn out in 2024.

Realistically, this looks like reaching a voter registration rate of 75% and a voter turnout rate of 65%. This would put us on par with the national voter turnout average across all NSLVE campuses.

Several factors are already working in our favor. The first and biggest is that in 2024 all in-person campus activities will have resumed, versus the mostly-virtual atmosphere of November 2020. Having even a small physical presence on campus will be an improvement over the last presidential election which was deep into the pandemic quarantine. The second factor is that the work we do in the fall of 2024 will be building on the strong foundation of campus partnerships and activities we've put in place over the last four years, including utilizing the Undergraduate Student Government, the Center for Leadership and Involvement, the Student Centers, and the first year orientation program. Over the last four years, we've worked to shore up these partnerships and provide simple and easy ways for them to stay involved. During the 2021-2022 school year, UChiVotes worked with the Undergraduate Student Government to pass [the UChiVote Act](#). We'll use this act as a framework for further engagement with campus partners. The last factor contributing to our success will be continuing to utilize some of the resources and tools we developed over the pandemic to provide a robust online communications system through the UChiVotes website, social media, and TurboVote.

Some new efforts we plan to introduce will cater to wider swaths of the undergraduate student population, specifically among STEM majors, who have lower voting rates than their peers. Our new efforts will continue to engage diverse populations on campus, and our student leaders have already started building relationships to make sure that all students across campus interact with our voting efforts multiple times throughout the 2024 election season.

By reaching our short-term goal of increased voter registration and participation, we will work toward our long-term goal of a culture of voting and democratic engagement on campus by bringing more campus partners into voter engagement efforts.

Strategies and Activities

We plan to implement the following strategies and activities into our 2024 voter engagement efforts.

Voter Registration

Our voter registration drive will kick off during pre-orientation, orientation, and welcome week: We plan to work with campus partners to ensure voter registration is incorporated into first-year pre-orientation and orientation programs through short PowerPoint and a link to our TurboVote site. We also plan to have our UChiVotes voting ambassadors table at the student involvement fair, all orientation activities organized by the IOP, and other opportunities throughout Welcome Week. We plan to continue working with campus partners to make sure voter registration has a plug-in button during student organization sign-ups as well. We'll also work to have an all-campus email go out for National Voter Registration Day.

After Welcome Week, we'll continue hosting voter registration drives including fun and interactive tables hosted by UChiVotes, engaging with registered student organizations to have them post and share our TurboVote link on their social media, as well as posting engaging content on our own. Additionally, we plan to do curated outreach specifically to STEM students through general education classes, on-campus residents through housing and Residence Life, and diverse populations through cultural organizations.

Voter Education

The first step in our voter education plan is making sure the UChiVotes website is a one-stop-shop for voter engagement. We'll utilize resources and tools created by our national partners to ensure that a student voter from any state can get all the information they need from uchivotes.com. We'll also be creating engaging how-to guides on social media to be shared out, making sure to demystify the voting process in short videos. Also on social media, we'll get testimonials from student voters on why they're voting and what issues they care about to encourage their peers to vote as well. Lastly, we'll partner with community organizations and the board of elections on educational events on campus.

Voter Turnout/GOTV

Given the short amount of time between when the Fall Quarter starts and Election Day and given that Illinois has same-day voter registration, a lot of our voter registration will coincide with our get-out-the-vote efforts. Overall, our gotv work will highlight how easy it is to vote, how many ways there are of voting, and how important it is to vote.

We will do this through on-campus communications from a variety of trusted messengers - all-campus emails from the dean, social media collaborations with popular registered student organizations, utilizing speakers and fellows at the Institute of Politics, and other departments and campus partners. At the same time, our voting ambassadors will be tabling, flyering, making announcements in classes, and hosting exciting events across campus to get the word out and make sure their peers have a plan to vote.

During early voting, we'll be utilizing the on-campus early voting location for the three days it operates. We'll have big signage leading to the early voting site, conveniently located in the student center. Voting ambassadors will be tabling the entire time the voting site is open to remind passers-by to stop in and vote. Our campus partners will be sharing communications, and we'll use social media to have engaging videos and posts.

On election day itself, our voting ambassadors will host Walks to the Polls with hot chocolate (November in Chicago requires it) and pastries so anyone who needs to vote can walk with their peers and friends and cast their ballots together.

Other Opportunities for Engagement

Throughout all of this, we'll also be working on creating an on-campus vote coalition to promote democratic engagement all year every year. This will lay the groundwork for future voter engagement.

Evaluation

Most of our evaluation will come from our 2024 NSLVE report. We'll compare all aspects of our 2024 NSLVE report to our 2020 report to see where we've improved and where there's still room for growth.

Beyond our NSLVE data, we'll also look at measures such as the number of voting ambassadors we've recruited and retained, the number of campus partners we've engaged with, and the number of active vote coalition members. We'll also collect feedback and testimonials from students and campus partners engaged to have an ongoing conversation on ways to improve. Lastly, we'll look at our TurboVote reports, social media accounts, and website analytics to review the number of students utilizing our voter engagement tools and resources.

Reporting

We will share our voter engagement highlights, activities, and successes both through UChiVotes channels and the IOP's channels, through website updates, social media posts, and newsletters. As an All In Challenge campus, both our Action Plan and our NSLVE report will be publicly available on their website.

We also will communicate with internal players, including UChiVotes voting ambassadors and IOP staff. Externally, we'll share our reports and activities with the campus community through reports to key stakeholders across campus, including campus departments and student groups, and University leadership, as well as local and national community partners. When our NSLVE data becomes public, we'll host a webinar for the campus community analyzing the results and brainstorm ways for further engagement.

We are proud of our voter engagement work and are excited to showcase our 2024 data to our University, campus community, and local and national partners.