

2022 University of Denver Campus Vote Plan

Summary

The University of Denver (DU) is deeply committed to student civic engagement. DU has a demonstrated history of coordinating large-scale voter registration, education, and mobilization efforts across campus that are year-round, in both even-years and odd-years, for state and local elections alike. This work is a great source of pride for our school, and has fostered rich campus culture around voting and civic participation.

DU believes that the most effective way to engage students in democracy is peer-to-peer, face-to-face organizing; in 2022, DU will focus our efforts on ensuring our students are being “met where they are at” with voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts that are student-friendly and inclusive. We will apply our learnings from years past, especially in 2020, to ensure our strategy is holistic and layered; we will leverage communications and campus visibility to ensure that all students are reached with critical voter registration and election information.

Our ultimate goal is that the DU campus experience is centered around civic participation, and that our voter registration, education, and mobilization efforts will feed into increasingly high voter registration and turnout rates. We are committed to continue building on the increases in voter turnout participation for DU’s students of color, and will work to ensure that marginalized students are centered in our efforts.

This plan is an overview of how we will approach civic engagement on DU’s campus in 2022.

Point of Contact

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Coalition description

The Center for Community Engagement to advance Scholarship and Learning (CCESL) and a nonpartisan community partner, New Era Colorado, are continuing our 9-year-long partnership in 2022 to carry out this plan. CCESL’s purpose is to engage the campus community to create meaningful change. One of the main initiatives of CCESL is civic development and voter registration.

New Era Colorado is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to engaging young people in democracy and has expertise in registering students to vote, as well as in educating students about changes to Colorado’s new election law (Colorado modernized our elections system in 2013, 2019, and 2021).

CCESL and New Era have identified avenues to reach students to provide access to register to vote and to get out the vote, including student leaders and faculty participation. Voter registration is continuous and sustained through even and odd years alike, and get-out-the-vote occurs during early voting and on Election Day in even and odd years alike. Efforts are integrated in the classroom, campus hotspots, and in student life.

Institutional Support

Chancellor Jeremy Haefner signed the ALL IN 2022 Action Plan on September 27, 2022, indicating DU institutional support for student civic engagement, voter registration, and participation in democracy.

Voter Registration

Regular, sustained tabling on campus

We provide opportunities for students to register to vote or update their address starting in January. Tables are also used as an opportunity to recruit student volunteers to help carry out the work to ensure that the work is effective, peer-to-peer, and builds up students to become leaders in civic engagement on campus. These tabling dates are scheduled strategically throughout the year with a heavy push in the beginning of the quarters, and leading up to the October 17 deadline for voter registration drives to submit forms in Colorado.

The [2021 Colorado Votes Act \(SB21-250\)](#) is now in effect, which gives first-time registrants the ability to use the last 4 digits of their Social Security Number for online voter registration. This addresses a long-standing barrier to voter registration that disproportionately impacted people of color and students, wherein online voter registration could only be accessed with a Colorado ID for first-time registrants. This update to the law will be communicated to students during tabling, to ensure that students who don't have time or the proper ID to register using a paper form know that they can simply register online; stickers with the proper URL for online registration will be provided to students as a reminder. Students will still be encouraged to register at the table, as in-person voter registration is the preferred, more effective tactic to engage students.

Voter registration email blasts to all students

DU has sent student-friendly, fact-checked voter registration email blasts to the student body twice an academic year for a number of years, with election information and student-g geared messaging drafted by New Era Colorado and reviewed for legal accuracy. The goals of these emails are to foster voter registration year-round, and to cut across the noisy environment of misinformation and disinformation with accurate, non-alienating information that helps students feel less confused and more guided. Other primary goals of the emails are to ensure students who have moved to Colorado from out-of-state understand their right to vote in Colorado, and that students understand that voter registration must be updated each time they have a change in address.

The [2021 Colorado Votes Act \(SB21-250\)](#) has now created a requirement that higher education institutions "provide by e-mail to each enrolled student information on voter eligibility and how to register to vote or update their voter registration in the statewide voter registration database." This is required twice per year, with the first notification being within the first full week of the fall semester and the second notification during the last full week of the spring semester. DU will continue this process, and email language will include all voter registration options, information about same-day voter registration laws, and other relevant election information.

Table during the Welcome Back events

We will use welcome back events, such as the DU Welcome Fair, as an opportunity to register students to vote, do outreach/education about the fact that you need to update your voter registration each time you move, Colorado students' right to vote in Colorado, and educate voters about other changes to Colorado's election law. By engaging students before school starts, we are able to get through to students before the busy school year begins.

National Voter Registration Day

Tuesday, September 20th is National Voter Registration Day, and we will table on campus to hopefully register hundreds of students to vote, and incorporate heavy voter education at a strategic time in the overall election calendar. There may be opportunities to gain media attention for these efforts, as we did in 2020, to continue fostering DU's culture of civic engagement in the broader community.

Potentially collaborate with departments and organizations across campus to offer voter registration

- Housing & Residential Education: We are interested in working to provide Residence Hall programming for students to ensure that new students living in the Residence Halls are educated on how they can register to vote at their new address.
- Collaborate with professors to offer voter registration: Because professors are a trusted resource for students, we would like for professors to offer a quick pitch for voter registration, and then give students the opportunity

to register. New Era may be able to provide short classroom visits in the fall to get students registered quickly in their classrooms.

- Sorority/Fraternity life: We would like to continue working with the Sorority/Fraternity community to ensure that members are offered the opportunity to register to vote, and plug into our efforts.

Voter turnout efforts

Voter turnout efforts will include:

- The placement of a permanent mail ballot drop box here on our campus has been ensured. It went into use during the election in June 2022. The box is available to members of our campus community who are eligible to vote.
- Flyering across campus to ensure students know what to do with their ballots when they receive them (include a photocopy of their student ID, a "Pioneer Card", if requested, etc.)
- Tabling on campus, particularly on the days in which DU has the Denver County Mobile Voter Service and Polling Center (dates have not been published yet by the Denver County Clerk, but traditionally this has been a 2-day span during early voting). When the Mobile Voter Service Center is on campus, tables will consist of voter education and walk-overs to the Mobile Voter Service Center. On other tabling days, tables will be centered around voter education and making vote plans.
- In partnership with New Era Colorado, students who are registered to vote will receive nonpartisan get-out-the-vote calls centered on making vote plans and supporting students with process-oriented election information. Students who have opted into texts from New Era may also receive text messages with similar content, to which students can reply and ask questions about voting and will receive live support.

Resources

- We consider the CCESL department at DU to be a huge resource; one of the core purposes of this department is to develop students civically, and CCESL has made carrying out and supporting voter registration efforts a fundamental priority of the department.
- New Era Colorado has been working on campuses in Colorado for over 10 years, and has unique election law experience and expertise that is specifically geared towards students and centers students of color. New Era provides high-quality information about the voter registration and voting process, while still making it digestible for students, and is a major partner on executing student engagement efforts.
- The Denver County Clerk's Office has expressed support for and commitment to DU's student civic engagement, and has built the Mobile Voter Service and Polling Center into their office's election priorities.

Timeline and evaluation

At the core of our planning is the critical question: "how will we know we are successful?" Our strategies and tactics are outcomes-based, meaning they are designed to achieve specific objectives including:

- Higher student voter registration and turnout rates, especially for students of color
- Improving student voter registration and turnout rates for STEM students
- Increase utilization of early voting by mail, dropbox, or in-person

Using NSLVE data, DU has identified the following successful outcomes:

- DU students voted at an overall rate of 76.7%, which is 15.1% higher than DU's 2016 voting rate and 10.7% higher than the average voting rate for all institutions in 2020.
- Overall increased student turnout rate in 2020 as compared to 2016 (23% increase for undergraduate students, 12% increase for graduate students).
 - Black student turnout rate increased from 59% to 69%
 - Hispanic student turnout increased from 64% to 76%
 - Asian student turnout increased from 49% to 64%
 - American Indian/ Alaskan Native student turnout increased from 61% to 79%
 - Student of two or more races' turnout increased from 59% to 78%
- Overall increased student registration rate in 2020 as compared to 2016 (76.9% in 2016, 87.1% in 2020).
- Increased student turnout rates for STEM students in 2020 as compared to 2016, across all fields measured (biological and biomedical sciences, computer and information sciences, and engineering and engineering technologies, mathematic and statistics, health professions, natural resources and conservation, and physical sciences) at an averaged 16% increase

- Increase utilization of early voting by mail, dropbox, or in-person in 2020 as compared to 2016 (7% increase in early voting, 2% increase in dropbox/ mail voting, and commensurate decrease in reliance on in-person Election Day voting)

Our priority in 2022 is to ensure midterm elections are a priority for students, faculty, and staff to foster increased student participation in midterm elections compared to 2018. In 2018, DU students voted at an overall rate of 50.9%, and our goal is to build past this rate. We will continue doing the work that we already know works best, while continuing to adapt to changing needs and growth areas in our programming. Our goal is to instill a sense of civic engagement during the time students' begin to identify with other campus values. The coalition will evaluate and debrief this vote plan after the 2022 election, and we are excited to compare the outcomes of 2022 to previous years, to best inform the future of our civic engagement work.