University of Illinois Chicago Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates for the 2024 Presidential Election

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Development

This UIC Action Plan was developed by staff, faculty, and students within Student Leadership and Civic Engagement and UIC's Core Committee, building upon previous UIC Action Plans and feedback from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. The coalition of UIC's CORE Group (in the 2020 UIC action plan, referred to as the Civic Engagement Coalition) comprises representatives from student affairs, academic affairs, government and public affairs, alumni, and students. CORE members reviewed ALL IN action plans from previous years to build upon the successes of our 2022 civic engagement efforts and develop the 2024 Action Plan.

Purpose

The purpose is to increase voter registration, education, and participation among UIC students. This is particularly important after the successful participation levels in the 2020 presidential election and then the decline of participation in the 2022 mid-year election. The additional purpose of this plan is to gather all of the various civic engagement efforts happening in the colleges, departments, and student organizations into one cohesive plan for everyone to get a better understanding and sense of what UIC is collectively doing and encourage more collaboration and cross-promotion.

Goals

Our goal is to increase campus-wide democratic engagement, focusing on voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement. Some key goals are to increase awareness of civic engagement resources (TurboVote) and support, increase cross-campus collaborations with and within CORE members, enhance program efforts for not just voter registration but also voter education and activation, and improve methods of publicity and promotion.

Implementation

This action plan will be implemented by CORE group members throughout UIC's main campus, both in and outside of the classroom setting. The action plan will be updated as needed and as circumstances arise. The action plan will be available on the UIC Student Leadership and Civic Engagement website (slce.uic.edu/civic-engagement/) and distributed to stakeholders on and off campus. SLCE will take the lead in following through with most of the plan and in consultation with the other CORE members. This plan will continue through January 20, 2025.

LEADERSHIP

UIC CORE Group Members: This group has no official charge; however, they are all invested UIC community members committed to campus-based civic engagement. They meet virtually once a month to give updates on various past and upcoming efforts to increase civic engagement on campus. Additionally, we are updated on issues and efforts happening at the state level in Springfield. There is an intentional effort to have members from upper administration, student affairs, the various colleges,

cultural centers, students, registered student organizations, as well as build our connections to community organizations, and local elections office.

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**Other members of our UIC community are open to join the CORE group permanently or just attend a meeting or two depending on their needs

Community Partners
ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, Illinois Campus Compact, Chicago Votes, Campus Vote Project, Civic Nation, Students Learn Students Vote, meetings with other civic engagement staff from other Chicagoland universities and Community Colleges, and the Chicago Board of Elections Commission

COMMITMENT

UIC has four strategic priorities that are supported by a decades-long, unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as to academic excellence. One priority is specifically around Chicago and Community Engagement. It states that "Civic and community engagement are integral to UIC's mission. We will collaborate with local stakeholders and organizations as true partners to address critical social and economic issues to advance the city of Chicago and beyond." These strategic priorities and the consistent references to them set a tone for a campus that real-world partnerships and engagement, including civic engagement, are a core part of the UIC experience and ones that the Chancellor looks to build on during their time on campus. UIC's Chancellor Marie Lynn Miranda has signed the ALL IN Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

LANDSCAPE

The University of Illinois Chicago is an acclaimed research institution with 16 colleges dedicated to the discovery and distribution of knowledge. Civic and community engagement are values that are deeply rooted in the history and identity of the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC). The university sits on the site of the Jane Addams Hull-House, Chicago's first social settlement and a place where immigrants of diverse communities gathered to learn, eat, debate, and acquire the tools needed to put down roots in their new country. UIC students and faculty are involved in various international, national, state, and local civic engagement projects while maintaining partnerships with many Chicago-area agencies and community organizations. UIC is the only research 1 public institution in Chicago and is both a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI). The university is one of 30 institutions to earn the Excelencia in Education's "Seal of Excelencia," a national certification that recognizes colleges and universities for their "unwavering commitment to intentionally serve Latino students, while serving all." For the Fall of 2024, there are 33,906 total students (22,495 undergraduates, 7,252 graduate students, 4,159 professional students) enrolled in its 16 colleges.

UIC students and faculty are involved in various civic engagement projects at international, national, state, and local levels while maintaining partnerships with many Chicago-area agencies and community organizations. The University of Illinois Engagement Portal, a database of public service activities, lists no fewer than 230 programs on the Chicago campus, while UIC maintains 135 partnerships with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) that are showed on the CPS activities database. Additionally, the Community Engagement Core at the UIC Center for Clinical and Translational Science operates 82 clinical health-related programs and is active in all 77 neighborhoods in Chicago. The Great Cities Institute's Neighborhoods Initiatives program has community partnerships spanning decades. UIC's relationships inform and enrich the education offered to its students and provide shared opportunities for learning, collaboration, and discovery.

GOALS

Short Term (2024 Presidential Election)
We are excited to build on the momentum from our 2016 and 2020 civic engagement efforts, and to build on what we have learned. For the short term, we are focused on the 2024 presidential election. More specifically, by utilizing data from the last presidential election and midterm election cycle as the baseline, some measurable goals are:
- 85% full student voter participation
- To increase our 2024 Voting Rate by 5 points
- To increase our 2024 Registration Rate by 5 points
- To increase our 2024 Rate of Registered Students who Voted by 5 points
- Plan at least 2 programs focused on voter education and/or combating political polarization/student apathy
- Establish a website where civic engagement programs/events are happening. (Currently, if a college is hosting an event, it is only known to students in that college)
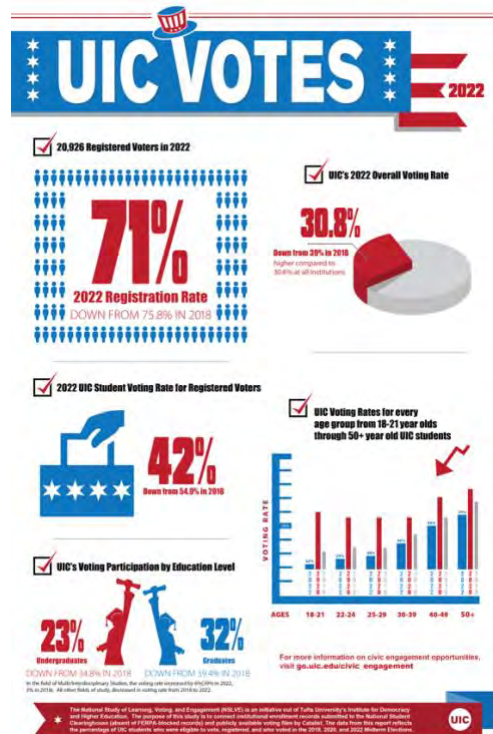
Long Term
UIC's overall long-term goal is to support students in developing as lifelong active citizens and for UIC stakeholders to collaborate with each other and not be as "siloed" in their efforts. To move toward that goal over the next 10 years, we hope to:
- Continue our efforts toward 100% full student voter participation by 2032
- Find ways to engage students who are not eligible to vote by hosting student dialogues
- Increase awareness/utilization of civic engagement website
- Plan monthly civic engagement events (workshop, film, dialogue, etc) throughout the academic year, regardless if during an election year
- Grow CORE committee to include at least one faculty, staff, and student from each of the 16 colleges and from main campus, Peoria campus, and Rockford campus.
- Reach out to other universities in Missouri Valley Conference to get an Athlete Challenge for UIC's conference by the next upcoming election in 2026
- Research the course catalog to find classes closely connected to civic engagement in order to establish connections with professors for future collaborations and programming and incentives (eg. offering class extra credit) by 2028.

NATIONAL STUDY OF LEARNING, VOTING, AND ENGAGEMENT (NSLVE)

According to the NSLVE report for 2022 election, UIC numbers went down but were above the national average. This report is available on the SLCE website. This data was used to set our short term goals for this upcoming election. Additionally, we have used the data shown below at our voter registration/education tables to motivate our students actually to vote in the 2024 election and help us increase the voting rate.

The data from this report reflects the percentage of UIC students who were eligible to vote, registered, and who voted in the 2018 and 2022 Midterm Elections.

20,926 Registered Voters in 2022, 71% Voter Registration Rate

- 20,629 Registered Voters in 2018, 75.8% Voter Registration Rate
- 30.8% UIC Overall Voting Rate (down from 39% in 2018, but higher compared to 30.6% at all institutions)
- 42% UIC Student Voting Rate for Registered Voters (down from 54.9% in 2018)
- 23% Undergraduate Voting Participation, 32% Graduate Voting Participation
- In the field of Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies, the voting rate increased by 6% (39% in 2022, 33% in 2018). All other fields of study, decreased in voting rate from 2018 to 2022.
- 22% UIC Voting Rate decreased for 18-21 year olds (and UIC's Voting Rates decreased for every age group in 2022)
    - 18-21 y.o. - In 2018 – 31%; In 2022 – 22%
    - 22-24 y.o. – In 2018 – 32%; In 2022 – 25%
    - 25-29 y.o. – In 2018 – 35%; In 2022 – 28%
    - 30-39 y.o. – In 2018 – 43%; In 2022 – 36%
    - 40-49 y.o. – In 2018 – 57%; In 2022 – 50%

- 50+ y.o. - In 2018 – 66%; In 2022 – 59%

STRATEGY

Voter Registration

- Turbo Vote - ongoing
  - Since the beginning of UIC's partnership with TurboVote in July of 2018, we have had 9,554 individual signups through the TurboVote platform and currently have 7,124 active users. We integrated the platform into the UIC Blackboard Learning Management System, and the Student Leadership and Civic Engagement website, along with its use in targeted social media and campus wide email marketing campaigns.
- Voter Registration tabling – ongoing
  - SLCE plans voter registration tabling throughout both semesters in key, high-traffic areas. Registered student organizations also do periodic voter registration tables. If any RSO or department contacts SLCE, we can provide a TurboVote referral code to help them track their numbers.
- Voter Registration at Orientation - ongoing
  - In partnership with our New Student and Family Programs, during the mandatory online modules that incoming students take prior to in person orientation, there is a slide about civic engagement and reminding the to register to vote or sign up for reminders at vote.uic.edu (which leads them to TurboVote).
- New Student Convocation – August 28, 2024
  - During New Student Convocation, we have been able to promote the TurboVote platform before, during, and after the event through a custom announcement/promotion using the venue ribbon board.
- Constitution Day – September 17, 2024
  - Political Science will host an event with UIC Law Professor Steven Schwinn to discuss "The Supreme Court and the Future of American Democracy." We will have voter registration tabling available throughout the duration of the event.
- National Voter Registration Day – September 17, 2024
  - We will host an event on campus to get as many students as possible registered to vote on National Voter Registration Day.
- Candidate Debates and Debate Watch Parties
  - We will host debate watch parties in our student center's Inner Circle (commuter dining area) for any presidential and vice-presidential debate. Refreshments will be provided and a voter registration table set up.
- Faculty Involvement
  - We plan to coordinate with faculty members to encourage their students to register to vote in the first weeks of classes.
- Increasing Availability of Information
  - We plan to create bulletin boards that have voter registration forms, voter guides, sample ballots, and issue guides that will be showcased in different offices and student-heavy locations around the university.

Voter Education

- Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day– September 17, 2024

- o SLCE will host a Constitution Day virtual bingo event in the morning and afternoon to encourage students to learn more about the US Constitution and how to become civically engaged.
- Candidate Debates and Debate Watch Parties
  - o Through hosting of debates and debate watch parties, students will have access to learning about candidates and their various viewpoints related to their candidacy and the election.
- UIC Voter Information Website
  - o We will continue to keep an updated website that students can visit for civic engagement. We plan to update this site to provide information about voter registration, information for voting, sample ballots, candidate issue guides, upcoming events, and other resources that may prove helpful to students.
- Voter Information Flyers
  - o We plan to regularly distribute voter information flyers with non-partisan details on candidate issues, voter registration information, and promotions for early voting.
- University Mass Email
  - o We will send a mass email regarding voter information and registration in the beginning weeks of the Spring 2024 and Fall 2024 semesters. The mass email will include links to our website and other resources on voting, as well as information for upcoming events surrounding civic engagement.
- Voter Information/Ballot Access Information Lunch
  - o We will host a lunch-in to teach interested students the ins and outs of voting. This includes discussing concerns first-time voters may have, informing participants of ballot access laws for Illinois, discussing candidate issues and stances (non-partisan), and simulations of polling stations and ballots. We will conclude with lunch and an open forum for students to get questions answered and discuss their experiences.

Voter Participation/Ballot Access/Get Out the Vote
- University Mass Email/Targeted Emailing/Election Engagement Strategy
  - o Turbo Vote
    - ▪ Through TurboVote, there will be email reminders sent out to anyone who opted in to receive them when they registered to vote.
  - o A mass email regarding voter information and registration in the beginning weeks of the spring and fall 2024 semesters. The mass email will include information about early voting at UIC, links to websites, and other resources on voting as well as information for upcoming events surrounding civic engagement. On March 4 and October 21, we will send another email to students reminding them about early voting and Election Day and provide information on how they can find their polling place.
  - o Students will be able to send emails to our office with questions or concerns they have regarding the elections. We will have the Civic Engagement Fellow and staff read and respond to said emails as quickly as they can.
- Bulletin Boards
  - o We plan to create bulletin boards that have voter registration forms, voter guides, sample ballots, and issue guides that will go to different offices and student-heavy locations around the university.
- Flyer Distribution

- o In the days leading up to the Primary and Election Day, we will post and distribute flyers encouraging students to get out and vote.
- Social Media
  - o We plan to organize social media campaigns to get students active and voting on campus. This would involve sending regular updates through various social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and multiple accounts to remind students of important deadlines and other pertinent information regarding the elections, deadlines, and the candidates. We are encouraging everyone to use the hashtag -#UICVotes
- Blackboard
  - o We are hopeful to continue our partnership with Blackboard administrators to have reminders on the Blackboard homepage for students and faculty members with information about early voting and Primary and Election Day voting. A permanent link to voter registration, through the TurboVote platform, already exists on the UIC Blackboard site.
- Primary Early Voting
  - o Primary early voting will be available at UIC March 11 through March 13 from 10am until 5pm for anyone that is registered to vote in the City of Chicago.
- Primary Day Voting
  - o University of Illinois at Chicago is a voting site.
- Party to the Polls
  - o SLCE will recruit other RSOs and department to sponsor a Party to the Polls. In the past, we have worked with Chicago Votes agency to help us provide election guides.
- Early Voting
  - o Early voting will be available at UIC from October 21st through November 4th from 10am until 5pm for anyone that is registered to vote in the City of Chicago.
- Election Day
  - o University of Illinois at Chicago is a Primary voting site for the 34th Ward of Chicago. This year, UIC is a supersite polling location. This will at least remove the barrier of students, faculty, and staff who are Chicago residents from having to go to their specific polling location to vote on Election Day.
- Election Results Watch Party
  - o We will host a watch party to reveal the election results on campus.

Challenges and Navigation
- With close to 34,000 students and 16 colleges, it is difficult to know what everyone is planning and doing. The SLCE website is our first attempt to try to consolidate all events and be the hub where students know they can go to find out all civic engagement programs. If any event is created in UIC Connection (Campus Groups platform) and then select "civic engagement" as the event type, it will automatically populate the list of events on the SLCE Civic Engagement website. The next challenge is to encourage everyone to post their events on UIC Connections. (RSOs already do but departments and colleges are not required).
- UIC has international students and undocumented students. Without being able to identify who is legally allowed to vote or not in the United States, we find it difficult to target specific resources to students. As a way to combat this, we want to offer more open-ended, open-dialogue spaces where students can engage in conversation about issues that matter to them. With this, students feel motivated to be interpersonal with their peers while encouraging those with the power to influence an election to make their way to the polling place.

- Many students at UIC commute to and from the campus (90%) and limit their involvement in various organizations because of that. To navigate through this issue, we think it would be pertinent to continue to use the student leaders who are actively involved on campus to get other students engaged civically as well as in their own student organizations. Students with the desire and passion to lead also make sure that other students' voices are heard. Ultimately, we hope a hierarchical, trickle-down effect is effective for peer motivation.
- With the outcomes of the past presidential election leading to polarizing effects on our campus, we find it necessary to remove students from their siloed perspectives. On our campus, we find it difficult to navigate educational events without students remaining open to ideas and stances on the complete end of the spectrum as theirs. In hopes of breaking the idea of identity politics and introducing students to more non-biased outlets, we look to offer more spaces for teaching how to properly research and assess validity while expanding students' concepts of their own beliefs.

Calendar of Events
- May through August 2023 – Voter Registration encouraged through New Student and Family Programs online orientation modules
- September 4-5, 2024 – Voter Registration Tabling at the Student Involvement Fair
- September 10, 2024 – Presidential Debate Watch Party in SCE Inner Circle
- September 17, 2024 – Celebrate Constitution Day with UIC Law Professor Steven Schwinn discussing "The Supreme Court and the Future of American Democracy"
- September 17, 2024 – National Voter Registration Day Tabling on the Quad
- Week of September 30, 2024 - [Official Mass Email] Early Voting and Election Day Voting
- October 1, 2024 – Vice Presidential Debate Watch Party in SCE Inner Circle
- October 4, 2024 - What's Going On? The Election and Racial Microaggressions by Counseling Center and Black Cultural Center
- October 7-11, 2024 – National Voter Education Week
- October 8, 2024 – Last day to register to Vote (by mail) for Presidential Election
- October 9, 2024 - Tea Time: Let's Ease Our Election Anxiety by Asian American Cultural Resource Center
- October 10, 2024 – Film Screening of UNDIVIDE US in SCE 713 hosted by SLCE and IPCE
- October 15, 2024 – Student Dialogue: Building a Campus Where You Can Be Seen and Heard hosted by SLCE and IPCE
- October 20, 2024 – Last day to register to vote (Online) for Presidential Election
- October 21, 2024 – On Campus Early Voting BEGINS
- October 21, 2024 – Creative Outlets for Election Stress by Counseling Center
- October 28, 2024 - Midday Mindfulness Session for Coping with Election Stress by Counseling Center
- October 30, 2024 – Party to the Polls hosted by SLCE, Student Advocacy Coalition, and Undergraduate Student Government with Chicago Votes
- November 4, 2024 – On Campus Early Voting ENDS
- November 4, 2024 – Build Your Own Election Stress Toolkit
- November 5, 2024 – Election Day
- November TBD, 2024 – Student Dialogue: Where Do We Go From Here… What Now?
- November 19, 2024 - Civic Engagement Lunch Talk – Delphine Labbé

Events yet to be scheduled:

We know there will be events that arise throughout the election cycle that will be added as unanticipated events.   In addition, we plan to do post-election events that help students see the importance of civic engagement beyond the election cycle and also in response to any needs/requests of our students.

REPORTING

This plan has been shared with all members of the CORE coalition, will be posted on the website of Student Leadership and Civic Engagement, and incorporated into reports for upper administration. The current and previous NSLVE data/reports are posted on the Student Leadership and Civic Engagement website (https://slce.uic.edu/civic-engagement/results/). Where applicable, we will also share updates and information through social media channels and official University news outlets.

EVALUATION

Every civic engagement event planned will be posted in UIC Connections (UIC version of Campus Groups). This platform automatically sends a quick evaluation or survey of the event to any participant checked in within 24-48 hours after the event. The CORE coalition will lead the evaluation process, building on what we have already started. We will continue to consider attendance at events/programs/early voting, implement evaluations or surveys at events, and work with NSLVE and our local elections board to get data on numbers for comparison to previous years. We plan to gather information throughout the process, and make adjustments to programming and outreach based on the data as we go along. We will also do an overall evaluation with all data after the 2024 elections, and use this data along with the information we receive in our next NSLVE report to evaluate our success in meeting the goals we have set out in this plan.