

Executive Summary

The OU Voter Engagement Campus Plan was developed by the members and director of the OU Civic Engagement Fellowship at the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center. It was written by the Civic Engagement Fellows, Natalie Bayer and Destinee Dickson, as well as the Civic Engagement Director, Lauren Schueler. This action plan is a coordinated way for members of the OU community to work together to create more opportunities for civic engagement and support current work already taking place on OU's campus. Numerous organizations and institutes in partnership with the Civic Engagement Fellows help implement this plan across the University of Oklahoma campus. The plan was originally developed in 2018 in order to address low turnout rates and increase political participation and civic engagement at OU and in the state of Oklahoma. This plan has already started by registering students for the 2020 primary election and will end once we receive our 2020 election turnout NSLVE results. We will then use those results and our experiences to write a report for 2022, while still promoting voting in local elections during the interim. We will implement this action plan by sharing it with various on-campus organizations. We will also monitor Oklahoma Votes to see where implementation is failing or more successful than expected and use this information to amend our plan over time. We will present this report to student affairs, student government, and other campus partnerships in order to solicit their insight. The OU Voter Engagement Campus Plan centers around our mission of registration, education and mobilization. In order to achieve success in these areas, our Campus Plan outlines strategies for election watch parties, larger-scale events, on- and off-campus registration and mobilization tabling, and our Politics and Pizza student-faculty lecture series over various topics relating to U.S. politics and international relations.

Leadership

The Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center

The Carl Albert Center is a unique nonpartisan institution that strengthens representative democracy through scholarship, learning, and service. Established in 1979 by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, the Center is a living tribute to the ideals, leadership, and accomplishments of the Honorable Carl Albert, native Oklahoman, University of Oklahoma alumnus, Rhodes scholar, and 46th Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Carl Albert Center provides many leadership opportunities for OU students, including the Carl Albert Civic Engagement Fellowship.

The Carl Albert Civic Engagement Fellows

Each academic year, two undergraduate students are selected to pursue the Carl Albert Center's efforts on-campus related to civic education and political engagements. The Civic Engagement Fellows co-chair Oklahoma Votes, which is comprised of a four-member student executive team and a campus-wide coalition for civic engagement.

The Center pursues these and related activities as a member of the National Campaign for Civic and Political Engagement. The National Campaign is a consortium of 21 institutions pursuing projects in civic engagement. It is staffed by the Institute of Politics in the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Director of N.E.W. Leadership and Civic Engagement, Lauren Schueler

Lauren Schueler is the Director of N.E.W. Leadership and Civic Engagement at the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center. Lauren coordinates the social media for the Center as well as the N.E.W. (National Education for Women's) Leadership program, which seeks to address the historical

under-representation of women in politics and public service. In addition, Lauren organizes the Carl Albert Center's annual Pipeline to Politics event and the Civic Engagement Fellowship.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma Campus Compact

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education sponsors a voter registration contest through Oklahoma Campus Compact. OU competes against other colleges and universities to register the most students to vote on their respective campuses. This year, the contest will run from July 1st through October 9th. In order to make the drive a success, the Carl Albert Civic Engagement Fellows will coordinate a voter registration drive in which we set up registration tables, disseminate registration information and instructions for absentee voting, target current and incoming students through orientation events and involvement fairs, and partner with various on-campus coalition organizations.

Oklahoma Votes

Oklahoma Votes is a campus-wide initiative to encourage students to register to vote and to participate in local, state, and national elections. The mission of Oklahoma Votes is "Registration. Education. Mobilization." Under the leadership of the Carl Albert Civic Engagement Fellows, Oklahoma Votes coordinates voter registration drives and many other civic engagement efforts on OU's campus.

Campus and Student Group Partnerships

Oklahoma Votes currently partners with many OU student groups, faculty members, academic departments, student affairs, and community groups in order to bolster our civic engagement efforts. As a large university that serves students from diverse backgrounds, majors, and areas of interest, it is crucial that we use these partnerships to implement our Campus Plan. These groups are instrumental in helping the OU community become more civically active and politically involved.

Student Groups include:

- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- American Indian Student Association
- Asian American Student Association
- Black Student Association
- Campus Activities Council Homecoming
- College Democrats at the University of Oklahoma
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Economics Club
- High School Leadership Conference
- Hispanic American Student Association
- Honors Student Association
- Oklahoma Intercollegiate Legislature
- Political Science Club
- Pride of Oklahoma
- Sigma Lambda Gamma Multi-Greek Cultural Society
- Social Work Student Association
- Student Government Association
- Student Government Exterior
- Student Leftist Union
- Voto Latino & Somos Más
- Young Republicans

Faculty and Departmental Partners include:

- Anne and Henry Zarrow College of Social Work

- College of Arts & Sciences Leadership Scholars
- Headington College
- OU Political Science Department
- University College Gateway to College Learning (freshman orientation program)

Student Affairs & Student Life Partners include:

- Housing & Food Services
- Independent Greek Council
- Interfraternity Council
- Multicultural Greek Council
- National Pan-Hellenic Council
- President's Leadership Class
- Sooner Orientation Weekend
- Student Government and Student Organization Services
- What To Do at OU

Community Partners include:

- College Democrats of Oklahoma
- Generation Citizen
- Norman 314 Action
- Rotaract Club of Norman

Oklahoma Votes also utilizes partnerships with several different locations on campus grounds for tabling and registering students to vote. Tabling locations include:

- Bizzell Memorial Library
- Dunham College
- Headington College
- Headington Hall
- Oklahoma Memorial Union

Commitment

Our voter engagement efforts are largely student-driven and supported by the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center, whose mission includes strengthening representative democracy through engaged and informed citizens.

The mission statement of the University of Oklahoma is “to provide the best possible educational experience for our students through excellence in teaching, research and creative activity, and service to the state and society.” Therefore, while the university as a whole does explicitly support community engagement, political participation is not part of that mission. Given our university’s limited commitment to improving democratic engagement, we recognize the importance of our work lies in institutionalizing civic participation and integrating it into OU’s culture.

Landscape

According to the Oklahoma Policy Institute, young voter non-participation is especially pronounced in the state of Oklahoma. In 2012, citizens aged 18-24 voted at the third lowest rate in the nation, at just 27.1 percent. According to Census Bureau survey data, only 11.8 percent of Oklahomans aged 18-24 and 20.9 percent of Oklahomans aged 25-44 voted in 2014.

According to the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement's (NSLVE) University of Oklahoma report, the 2012 voting rate for students was 41 percent and the 2014 voting rate was 16%. For the age group of 18-21 year olds, 4,313 of the 13,195 students enrolled on campus voted in the 2012 Presidential Election. For the age group of 22-24 year olds, 6,340 of the 2,396 students enrolled on campus voted in the 2012 Presidential Election. For the age group of 18-21 year olds, 1,179 of the 14,786 students enrolled on campus voted in the 2014 Midterm Election. For the age group of 22-24, 843 of the 6,770 students enrolled on campus voted in the 2014 Midterm Election.

According to 2018 NSLVE data, the University of Oklahoma's voting rate was 33.3 percent in 2018, a 17.5 percent increase from 2014. Moreover, from 2014 to 2018, OU's overall voter registration rate increased by 8.1 percent and OU's voting rate for registered students increased by 21.3 percent. These data show that our civic engagement efforts are paying off on campus, and that with continued investment in the strategies outlined in our campus plan, we can increase the efficacy of young Oklahoma voters and dramatically increase their political participation.

Further, NSLVE data shows that the groups with the lowest voter registration rates and turnout on OU's campus are students who study STEM and/or Business. In 2018, Engineering and Engineering Technologies students voted at a rate of only 23.6 percent; Business, Management, and Marketing students voted at a rate of only 26 percent; and Physical Sciences students voted at a rate of 25.3 percent. As these groups are relatively isolated on campus, our goals moving forward must include meeting these students where they are. Oklahoma Votes was met with great success when we attended and registered students the Fall 2019 engineering involvement fair, so we plan to continue attending this and other similar events in order to reach STEM and Business students.

From our efforts to engage more conservative students on campus, we have found that these students are generally less willing to participate in Oklahoma Votes and other civic engagement-themed events and programming. Additionally, having undergone changes over the last year, these groups are not succeeding in engaging their own membership in political and civic engagement conversations on campus. As a nonpartisan organization, Oklahoma Votes will prioritize outreach to right-leaning students in order to ensure that all students feel they have a voice in the political process.

Finally, the membership of our Oklahoma Votes executive team has drawn attention to the low rate of civic engagement among Asian, Asian American, and Native American student populations. In 2014, only 7.2 percent of registered Asian students at OU voted, and only 15.6 percent of registered Native American students voted. No NSLVE data were collected for these groups in 2018. Moving forward, our civic engagement efforts will prioritize increasing registration and voting rates for these demographics, who have historically been less civically engaged.

Although we've been carrying out voter registration work on campus for many years, this is our second voter engagement campus plan. The goal of this plan and the strategies herein will help us increase our visibility and improve the success of our efforts on campus. Students around the country are more engaged than ever and we want to capitalize on that momentum as we build a solid foundation for civic mindedness on campus.

Goals

Long-Term Goals

- Create a polling location on campus in order to further increase voter turnout

- Work with university administration and on-campus stakeholders to create Student Government Legislation that designates election day as a “dead day”
- Work to create more systematic collaboration across campus through developing a plan for representative-based monthly coalition meetings
- Institutionalize voter registration for incoming students through registering students at the Sooner Orientation Weekend Involvement Fair and other orientation activities
- Grow partnerships with political and civic engagement groups such as Oklahoma political parties, policy- and politics-based student organizations, and political science department programs
- Improve outreach to marginalized groups on campus through focusing our voter turnout and registration efforts on groups of students that are historically less civically engaged
- Improve outreach to right-leaning students on campus
- Receive designation as a Voter Friendly Campus through NASPA and Campus Vote Project
- Utilize a sub-committee based structure for Oklahoma Votes to support future growth

Short-Term Goals

- Achieve a 60% voter participation rate during the 2020 election cycle
- Increase registration and voting rates among STEM and Business students by 5 percent during the 2020 election cycle
- Increase registration and voting rates among Asian, Asian American, and Native American students by 5 percent during the 2020 election cycle
- Continue to prioritize outreach to marginalized groups on campus
- Increase the number of active student group partnerships with Oklahoma Votes by 10
- Diversify student group partnerships through better incorporating right-leaning organizations and actively pursuing our goal of nonpartisanship
- Host speakers who represent a diverse range of political positions and perspectives, including right-leaning politicians, interest groups, and lobbyists who have thus far been difficult to connect with on campus
- Increase attendance at debate and election watch parties during lead-up to the primary and general elections
- Increase attendance at our Politics & Pizza Discussion Series through better promoting these events through social media and campus-wide emails
- Win 1st place for in-state and out-of-state registrations in the Oklahoma Campus Compact Voter Registration Contest through registering 2020 students in 2020
- Improve engagement with students through campus-wide memos, press releases, cooperation with on-campus and local news organizations, and our various social media platforms
- Better promote Oklahoma Votes and opportunities for involvement through developing more attractive and engaging public relations materials, including promotional videos
- Increase volunteer participation and accountability through codifying a system for volunteer meetings and training sessions
- Increase number of regular volunteers to 25

Strategy

Voter Registration

Tabling: To increase the number of students registered to vote, we will have various tabling locations all over OU's campus. At these tables, we will have Oklahoma and National voter registration forms as well as computers/tablets where students can fill out online forms like to request absentee ballots and look up information related to their voter registration status. The Civic Engagement Fellows, the Oklahoma Votes Team, and volunteers will encourage OU students passing by to get registered and answer any questions

about the voting registration process, elections, and voting procedures. We will table at the various Residential Colleges and other OU student living areas on campus, the Bizzell Memorial Library, and the Oklahoma Memorial Union. We will also table at various student group meetings and campus events like the Engineering Welcome Event, Marching Band Orientation, and other events.

Student Orientation Weekend Involvement Fair: Student Orientation Weekend happens at the beginning of every school year to welcome new students to campus. There is an OU Involvement Fair during Student Orientation Weekend for new students to meet different people, get acquainted with the campus and community, and receive information about the many services and programs at OU. The Civic Engagement Fellows set up a booth at the Involvement Fair and register students to vote throughout the night. This event always increases registration numbers on campus and encourages new students to get civically involved.

Communication with Political Science Professors: The Civic Engagement Fellows email several Political Science Professors at OU and then schedule days and times to come to their classes and get students registered to vote. During the class period, Fellows also give a brief presentation on OU Votes and the importance of voting.

National Voter Registration: The Civic Engagement Fellows and the Oklahoma Votes Team will

South Oval Events: There are always different events happening on the South Oval, and we are planning to set up booths and hold political events on the South Oval that encourage students to get registered to vote. We will also possibly collaborate with other student organizations, such as the Student Government Association, to create events with our partners and help increase registration numbers.

Greek Life Efforts: We are looking at increasing our efforts in the Greek Life community to help get fraternity and sorority members registered to vote. We involved all 5 Greek councils about the mission of Oklahoma Votes and our goal to register the Greek system. This year, Oklahoma Votes visited chapter meetings to register members in the organization to vote and created voter registration competition among the sororities and fraternities on who could register the most members to vote in the Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Council. Also, National Pan-Hellenic organizations Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Voter Education

Politics and Pizza Discussion Series: As a reflection of their commitment to civic education, the Carl Albert Center and the OU Department of Political Science will continue to jointly sponsor “Pizza and Politics” nights on the OU campus. These informal gatherings are designed to foster student-faculty discussions about various topics relating to U.S. politics and international relations. Three or four sessions are typically scheduled over the course of the fall and spring semesters and have been met with large success in years past. Students enjoy having the opportunity to come together and discuss important political topics. Politics and Pizza enables students to hear about OU Votes and the voter registration competition.

On-Campus Speakers: Throughout the school year, the Carl Albert Fellows will host on-campus speakers at various events and at the Politics and Pizza Discussion Series. These speakers can range from professors, political candidates, legislative directors, campus staff, etc. These speakers will help teach voter education by providing information about participating in elections.

Social Media Campaign: For this election year, we want to launch a social media campaign encouraging students to educate themselves on different candidates and let their voices be heard through their votes. We are planning to post different polling locations and reminders about voting on our social media pages. We also plan to take over the OU Snapchat on Election Day and post updates and reminders about voting.

Other Events:

Election Watch Parties: As student interest in the election continues to build this year, the Carl Albert Center will seek to get students involved and motivated. We will host debate watch parties at the Center, and we plan, in conjunction with SGA, to host a large election night watch part. In these various watch parties, students gather on campus to watch a debate or election results streaming in on major television news networks and to hear analysis from professors of American politics. The election watch parties have always drawn a tremendously positive response from the students.

Big 12 Voting Challenge: OU Votes is working to join the Big 12 Voting Challenge. The Carl Albert Fellows and the Carl Albert Director of Civic Engagement will work to promote voter engagement not just at OU, but also throughout our entire conference.

Candidates on Campus: To increase student engagement in elections, we are planning to host different running candidates at OU prior to Election Day. These candidates could have a debate and present their platforms to OU students and encourage them to vote on Election Day.
(This may not happen but I remember discussing it during the meeting so I wanted to include it.)

National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement Conference at the Institute of Politics at Harvard University: More than 60 student ambassadors from 30 colleges and universities across the country exchange their opinions on the state of the nation and topics of concerns and discussion on their campuses during the National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement annual conference. The University of Oklahoma Carl Albert Civic Engagement Fellows attend this conference every year and learn about different ideas and activities they can bring back to OU's campus.

Oklahoma Gubernatorial Candidate Forum: The Carl Albert Fellows will be joining Gallogly College of Engineering, Fine Arts, Price College of Business, Gaylord College, OU Public Affairs, and the Oklahoma Academy to host a Gubernatorial Candidate Forum on Thursday, October, 18 from 5:30-7:30 pm. Prior to the Forum, we will encourage OU students to join us in hearing the different candidates speak on a variety of topics.

Reporting

The campus plan will be published on the Oklahoma Votes website and social media, as well as by some of the partner organizations. The Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center and Oklahoma Votes will attempt to get university and local news outlets to cover stories on campus civic engagement through press releases and direct contact to reporters. We hope to also have it confirmed by the OU Student Government Association.

Evaluation

We will evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts in a few different ways. We want to know how many people were impacted by each event, if those students found the events helpful, and if those numbers reflect in our voter registration and turnout numbers from our NSLVE report. This information will be collected and evaluated by the Carl Albert Fellows and Oklahoma Votes.

The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

NSLVE offers colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates and, for interested campuses, a closer examination of their campus climate for political learning and engagement and correlations between specific student learning experiences and voting. The University of Oklahoma has been participating in this study since its inception in 2012 and now has data for the universities student voter registration and turnout for 2012, 2014, and 2016. This metric will help us evaluate how we are performing individually and nationally year to year through comparison of presidential and midterm election years and help guide our future planning for voter registration and mobilization. This data can be obtained by contacting Lauren Schueler at lschueler@ou.edu.

Voter Mobilization

We will evaluate voter mobilization through our voter registration contest through the Oklahoma Campus Compact. We hope to increase our voter registration numbers from last year's competition and win the competition by registering the most students to vote on our campus. We will target all incoming and current students to help make our voter drive successful and utilize our student group partnerships and various tabling locations.

Election Watch Parties

As student interest in the election continues to build this year, we will seek to get students involved and motivated through election watch parties. We will host debate watch parties, and we hope, in conjunction with Student Government Association, College Democrats of OU, and College Republicans of OU, to host a large election night watch party. Students will gather on campus to watch a debate or election results streaming in on major television news networks and to hear analysis of American politics. We will evaluate the turnout of our watch parties and examine if they furnish a positive response from students.

Politics and Pizza Discussion Series

We will also analyze the event attendance at our Politics and Pizza Discussion Series that's hosted by the Carl Albert Fellows. The Carl Albert Center and the OU Department of Political Science have jointly continued to sponsor "Pizza and Politics" nights on the OU campus. Politics and Pizza reflects our commitment to civic education and the more students we can get to attend, the more accomplished we will feel because more students will be able to engage in a political experience.