

**December 2021  
Version 1.0**

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Executive Summary

Voting is an important part of being a citizen of the United States of America. Elected officials make important decisions that directly affect our lives now and in the future. Voting is our opportunity to choose the decision makers and express our wants, needs and desires.

As one of the country’s top academic institutions for research and innovation, the University of Pittsburgh has long held a commitment to civic engagement and is committed to working on a University-wide level to create a more civically engaged institution. In recent years, the combined efforts of the University on an institutional level including the creation of the Pitt Votes initiative in 2019– along with grassroots mobilization on the student level– has led to historic levels of voter registration and voting rates. As of 2020, the voter registration rate at the

University of Pittsburgh was 90.7 percent, and the voting rate among the student population was 78.5 percent (12.6 percentage point increase from 2016). The University earned a Voter Friendly Campus designation from NASPA and the Campus Vote Project in March 2021 and Gold Medal Designations from the ALL IN Democracy Challenge for the 2020 General Elections and the 2018 Midterm Elections.

*Mission:* The mission of the Pitt Votes initiative is to foster a more civically engaged student body by making voter registration, education, and advocacy tools accessible to all students and by encouraging a long-term commitment to civic action and engagement from both students and the institution.

The short and long-term strategies proposed in this plan are designed to improve voter registration, education and engagement at the University of Pittsburgh. This action plan extends through the academic year (AY) of 2023-2024 and will be updated annually based on self-evaluation and feedback from institutional and external partners. As this plan builds on our 2020 Voter Engagement Plan, it will provide a list of completed action items in AY0 (2019-2020) and AY1 (2020-2021) in the *Strategies* section.

*Statement of Nonpartisanship:* The Pitt Votes Initiative does not support or oppose candidates for public office nor take a stand for or against any political party.

*Land Acknowledgement:* We recognize that the University of Pittsburgh occupies the ancestral land of the [Adena culture](#), [Hopewell culture](#), and Monongahela peoples, who were later joined by refugees of other tribes (including the Delaware, Shawnee, and Haudenosaunee), driven here from their homelands by colonizers. We honor these traditional Native inhabitants of this place and uplift their historic, unique, and enduring relationship with this land, which is their ancestral territory. We pay our respects to their Elders and their past, present, and future people, community, and culture. While we cannot change the past, we commit to continued gratitude for the gifts of nature, along with ongoing respect, care, and stewardship of the land, each other, and future generations. Learn more about land acknowledgement from the Office of Sustainability [here](#).

## Leadership

The Office of PittServes within the Division of Student Affairs will provide leadership and direction regarding the Voter Engagement Plan. The structure will include a coalition, a committee and a student task force.

All leadership of the Pitt Votes Initiative will be diverse, inclusive and representative of the University of Pittsburgh. The Pitt Votes team acknowledges that communities of color encounter barriers to voter registration, voter information, and other bias throughout the process. We will work hard to educate our international students— while some may not be eligible to vote in the United States, being democratically engaged remains an important aspect of development.

**Pitt Votes Coalition** – identify areas of improvement for the civic engagement work already being done on campus. Coalition will meet at the beginning of each semester.

**Pitt Votes Steering Committee** – explore and design innovative and inclusive ideas that we can implement throughout the year that will create a culture for civic engagement through the entire

campus. Committee will meet biweekly or weekly depending on time of year and needs.

**Student Task Force & Student Ambassador Program** – students from around the university that have committed to increasing civic engagement. Task Force will meet monthly during the academic year and once in the summer.

Membership for the various sectors of Pitt Votes will be a one-year commitment with the eligibility to remain engaged thereafter. Recruitment will occur throughout the year with target university and community stakeholders welcomed onto the various groups based upon gaps and review of needs and goals.

#### Pitt Votes Coalition

The Pitt Votes Coalition supports civic learning and political engagement at the University of Pittsburgh by coordinating voting activities across campus. The goal of this coalition is to increase campus-wide democratic engagement with a focus on voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement. With representatives from a broad cross-section of student organizations, university departments and academic units from across campus, the Coalition will leverage current resources, provide support for existing activities and expand opportunities for engagement.

The Pitt Votes Coalition is led by staff in the Office of PittServes. Membership to the Coalition is open to faculty, staff and students who have an interest in supporting the work of the *Voter Engagement Action Plan*. The coalition will meet once a semester and communicate electronically when necessary. The primary goal of the meetings will be to share updates, gather input for program ideas moving forward and collect resources for future engagement.

The Pitt Votes Coalition will serve as the lead agency on voter registration, engagement and education work with the purpose of driving resources and opportunities throughout campus. Tactical advisement, ongoing support and structure advancement will be provided through two subgroups: the Pitt Votes Steering Committee and the Pitt Votes Student Task Force, providing input and support from a variety of perspectives.

The Pitt Votes Coalition members comprise a university-wide approach to include multiple faculty, staff and students throughout the University. Our goal is to have representation from all academic schools in addition to several non-academic departments throughout campus. Coalition members will join on a rolling basis and will serve one academic term, with the possibility of renewal. Coalition members are able to send proxy representatives when unable to participate.

#### Pitt Votes Steering Committee

The Pitt Votes Steering Committee serves to guide the writing and implementation of the *Democratic Engagement Action Plan*. This committee is smaller than other involved groups, comprised of student leadership. Steering Committee participation is on a volunteer basis, but typically includes a graduate student in the Office of PittServes and students completing fellowships with national partners. The Pitt Votes Coalition leadership can use discretion to open participation in the working group beyond this representation.

#### Pitt Votes Student Task Force & Student Ambassador Program

The Pitt Votes Student Task Force & Student Ambassador program will foster a collaborative environment that empowers student organizations and leaders who are currently working on

voter registration and engagement efforts across campus to make a larger, more inclusive impact. The Student Task Force & Student Ambassadors will support the utilization of resources and networks affiliated with Pitt Votes to supplement ongoing civic engagement work and ensure that voter registration and engagement remains a priority across campus. Ultimately, the goal of this task force is to put in place tangible, sustainable structures and systems that ensure collaborative voter registration and engagement efforts across campus during each election cycle. Centralizing all voter registration efforts under the Pitt Votes brand is an essential step in creating a University-wide effort that feels meaningful, approachable and useful.

The secondary goal is to build relationships among student organizations and support collaboration and idea sharing. This task force will ideally serve as the touchstone for various groups and entities to be engaged with one another in pursuing their shared goal of increasing voter registration and engagement on campus.

The Student Task Force is based within the Student Government Board at the University of Pittsburgh and works alongside the other Pitt Votes subgroups. The student ambassador program is a less rigorous time commitment aimed to expand access and engagement across campus. Led by a member of the Pitt Votes steering committee, student ambassadors commit 5-10 hours a week and engage their own classes, organizations, peers, as well as participate in other Pitt Votes events and outreach.

#### Campus Partners

The University of Pittsburgh has several academic departments, university departments and student organizations that are committed to voter engagement.

The following is a fluid list of academic departments and student organizations:

- Office of Community & Government Relations
- Faculty Network for Student Voting Rights at the University of Pittsburgh
- Division of Student Affairs, Office of the Dean
- Office of Residence Life
- Student Life
- Pitt Program Council (PPC)
- Student Government Board (SGB) CGR Committee
- NextGen
- Political Science Student Association
- College Democrats
- Student Office of Sustainability (SOOS) Votes Campaign
- Hillel MitzVote
- Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life

#### Community Partners

Our voter engagement work at the University of Pittsburgh will have engagement and support from community partners. These community partners will provide support on projects as well as provide resources to eliminate barriers to student voting.

The following is a fluid list of community partners:

- City of Pittsburgh, Office of the Mayor

- Chatham University, Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics
- Carnegie Mellon University, Office of Student Leadership, Involvement and Civic Engagement (SLICE)
- League of Women Voters
- Allegheny County, Office of the County Executive
- YWCA Greater Pittsburgh

#### National Partners

A coalition of national and regional partners have been established by the University of Pittsburgh. This group will serve as resources to share strategies, lend assistance in creating initiatives, and assess successes and challenges. The following is a fluid list of national and regional partners:

- All In Democracy Challenge
- Campus Elections Engagement Project
- Campus Vote Project
- DemocrACCy Network – ACC Affiliated Network
- National Voter Registration Day
- Students Learn Students Vote Coalition
- TurboVote
- When We All Vote

Additional support from national partners beyond resources and information include:

Campus Elections Engagement Project (CEEP) – is a national non-partisan project that helps America's colleges and universities get as many of their 20 million students as possible to register, volunteer in campaigns, educate themselves, and turn out at the polls. We teach administrators, faculty, staff and student leaders to use their institutional resources to engage students.

The University of Pittsburgh will have up to two (2) fellows (available to any current student) that will assist in the development of this plan and implement independent ideas on campus. The goal is to engage students in the entire election process.

Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellowship will permit up to two (2) fellows (available to any current student) that will work with the entire team to assist in the engagement of the action plan and consistent revisions to this action plan. In addition, this person will explore hosting events, building coalitions, etc.

#### Commitment

The University of Pittsburgh has remained at the forefront of research and innovation through continuous changes in the landscape of the city, region and beyond. As these landscapes transform, the University has utilized critical reflection and dialogue to create comprehensive, collaborative initiatives that maintain its status as a leading institution. In this spirit, the University launched an updated five-year *Plan for Pitt* in the Fall of 2021, centering around six values: academic excellence, community, collaboration, sustainability, innovation, and inclusion. The University's mission focuses its successes in the areas of (1) its people, (2) its programs, and (3) its purpose.

Specifically, the *Plan for Pitt* places emphasis on expanding opportunities for civic and global engagement within its programs area. Action items within this area include prioritizing student skill development in civic engagement, expanding opportunities for community-engaged scholarly and creative work, strengthening coordination and connection between engagement initiatives, and prioritizing impactful and meaningful engagement. This emphasis was as a result of the intentional inclusion of a variety of populations who exist in the Pitt community in determining what the University should place priority on in the upcoming five years. Pitt Votes is included in this institutional commitment. Students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members have expressed a desire to improve the civic commitment of members of the University through various initiatives.

Within the *Plan for Pitt*, civic action will be a priority in coursework, research, student programming and overall university culture. The Pitt Votes initiative will be empowered to emphasize the importance of voting as a form of civic engagement with the help of these institutional commitments.

## Landscape

### Campus Political Climate

As described previously, the University has outlined a strong commitment to civic engagement in its five-year *Plan for Pitt*. Accompanying the recent emphasis placed on engagement at the University-level is a commitment by various schools, departments, offices and student organizations to take a collaborative approach to increasing all forms of engagement at Pitt. In addition, there are countless collaborative efforts occurring between University and community stakeholders including support around education, entrepreneurship, public health, etc. Based on NSLVE data (discussed in further detail in a later section) the University of Pittsburgh performs well in voter engagement— its 2020 voting rate of 78.5% is roughly 9% higher than the average voting rates of similar institutions participating in the study.

### Curriculum

The University of Pittsburgh-Pittsburgh campus comprises 16 schools and colleges and 646 degree and certificate programs with an extensive variety of curriculums. Within the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences, which houses more than 10,000 undergraduates, General Education Requirements include courses relating to social science, historical analysis, global awareness, and cultural understanding. There are further curricular opportunities related to civic engagement within several specific schools, programs, and departments such as the School of Social Work, the Urban Studies program, the Department of Political Science, Pitt Public Health and more.

### Co-Curriculum

Beyond the myriad engagement efforts already occurring, work is also being done to evaluate the alignment of students within these efforts to further improve the landscape of community and civic engagement. Multiple entities within the University have collaborated to create the Civic Pathways Initiative, originally created at Stanford University, to assess where students may want to engage with their surrounding communities on a local, national, and global stage. The Civic Pathways Initiative aims to create community engaged experiences visible and available to students along with supporting them as they have community engagement experiences that support their educational journey. Policy and governance is one of the pathways available through this initiative and will serve as an additional tool. Students have opportunities for co-

curricular engagement within but not limited to the Institute of Politics, PittServes, Community & Government Relations, the University Honors College, and the Outside The Classroom Curriculum.

### Student Organizations

There are a number of student organizations related to political engagement and/or advocacy at the University of Pittsburgh, including but not limited to College Democrats, College Republicans, College Libertarians, the Student Government Board, the Graduate and Professional Student Government, the ACLU Club, Black Action Society, and BridgePittsburgh. These and other student organizations have worked tirelessly in recent election years to increase voter registration and turnout rates on campus. Pitt Votes will work alongside student organizations to continue their efforts while providing access to additional resources and tools.

### Demographic Makeup

The following University of Pittsburgh demographic data was taken from the institution's Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and was most recently updated to reflect Fall 2020 demographics. *Note: while Pitt currently does not collect non-binary or transgender as a gender category, Pitt intends to collect and report this moving forward. Race/ethnicity and gender categories used are those defined and used by the U.S. Department of Education.*

- Undergraduate population: 24,284
  - 96% full-time, 4% part-time
  - 53.5% female, 46.4% male
  - 68.8% White, 10.1% Asian, 5.8% Black or African American, 5.7% Hispanic or Latino, 4.4% Two or More Races, 3.7% International, 0.1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1.5% Race Unknown
- Graduate population: 8,978
  - 80% full-time, 20% part-time
  - 59.0% female, 41.0% male
  - 54.9% White, 7.1% Asian, 5.0% Black or African American, 4.7% Hispanic or Latino, 2.7% Two or More Races, 20.2% International, 0.1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 5.3% Race Unknown

### Budget

Current Pitt Votes budget allocation is being shared between the Office of PittServes and the Office of Community and Governmental Relations. Additional funding is possible from Student Government Board and various academic departments pending program implementation. Budget allocations will vary year-to-year and will be carefully managed to evaluate future needs. It is estimated a programming budget could range from \$5,000 to \$15,000 annually.

### Laws

The Pitt Votes initiative commits to sharing up-to-date information about voting laws for students so they are aware of all their voting options. The most recent impactful state law in Pennsylvania was Act 77, a voting reform bill that enabled most Pennsylvania voters to request a mail-in ballot as of October 2019. If a Pitt student is eligible to vote in the United States, they are eligible to register locally with their address in Allegheny County and use their student ID as voter ID. However, the Pitt Votes initiative does not indicate a preference for where students vote- that decision is left up to the student.

## Mission & Goals

Mission: The mission of the Pitt Votes initiative is to foster a more civically engaged student body by making voter registration, education, and advocacy tools accessible to all students and by encouraging a long-term commitment to civic action and engagement from both students and the institution.

### Quantitative Goals:

- **2022 Midterm Elections** (*Targets set based on increases between 2014-2018 rates*)
  - Voting Rate: **65%** (18% increase from 2018 Midterm Voting Rate)
  - Registration Rate: **90%** (6% increase from 2018 Midterm Registration Rate)
  - Yield Rate: **63%** (10% increase from 2018 Midterm Yield Rate)
- **2024 General Elections** (*Targets set based on increases between 2016-2020 rates*)
  - Voting Rate: **85%** (6.5% increase from 2020 General Voting Rate)
  - Registration Rate: **94%** (3% increase from 2020 General Registration Rate)
  - Yield Rate: **90%** (3.5% increase from 2020 General Yield Rate)

## Strategies

*Bold items indicate a current priority.*

### Completed Action Items, Year 0 – Academic Year 2019-2020

- Launched Pitt Votes effort – created graphics, started using branding for outreach
- Established partnerships with several national/local partners
- Dedicated website through TurboVote – [pittvotes.turbovote.org](http://pittvotes.turbovote.org)
- Hired a graduate student and a CEEP Fellow to provide leadership and support
- Gathered materials from national and state partners to use at outreach events
- Hosted the PA Student Voting Summit in February in collaboration with Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project, All In Democracy Challenge
- Participated in National Voter Registration Day (September 2019)
- Peer-to-Peer Training on Voter Registration – Student organization lead effort with peer-to-peer training on voter registration practices as a tool to encourage voter participation
- Voter Registration Drives – Across campus, University departments, student organizations, and student leaders continually put together voter registration drives or events with the intent of getting as many students registered to vote as possible
- Oversaw outreach and education regarding Census – email communication, social media usage, event for student organizations (cancelled due to participation)
- Tabled at and attended events on campus for registration and information distribution, including but not limited to:
  - Fall Fest (September 2019)
  - Pitt Make A Difference Day (October 2019)
  - Dick Thornburgh – Draw the Lines Forum Tabling (January 2020)
  - Elsie Hillman Civic Engagement Forum: Never a Spectator (February 2020)

### Completed Action Items, Year 1 - Academic Year 2020-2021

- Relaunched Pitt Votes initiative to increase awareness and demonstrate the University commitment to democracy engagement
- Established a comprehensive website to act as students' home-base for voter engagement



- Directly spoke to approximately 1408 students in classroom and student organization meetings over zoom
- Engaged entire campus community through email blasts and a pop-up on MyPitt that provided voter information and reminders
- Earned *Voter Friendly Campus* designation in March 2021
- Collaborated with the Counseling Center, OCC, Marketing, Residence Life, and other divisions of student affairs to put on programming throughout the fall semester
- Answer students' questions about voting via email and zoom office hours
- Created a resources webpage that individual students or student organizations can tap into in efforts to educate members
- Worked with the Faculty Network for Student Voting Rights on a statement to be include course syllabi
- Worked alongside the student leadership of the Pitt Votes Student Task force to continue recruit and design outreach efforts connected to the November elections
- Had a senior member of University Administration (i.e. University of Pittsburgh Chancellor) deliver a call-to-action as far as voter education, registration and engagement
- Students living within the residence halls were asked about their voter registration through the staff of Residence Life
- Participated in National Voter Registration Day (September 2020)
- Educated students with information in the Vote by Mail option for PA residents
- Explored national, state, and local resources and continue to establish functional relationships that connect these resources to students
- Partner with the various national/statewide organization to develop training for student ambassadors
- Active Citizenship FAQ – answer the “why” for students
- Supported local Voting Summit(s) – including encouraging students to attend
- Created Election Literacy guide – educate students through various formats with voter responsibilities (i.e. terms, dates, rules, etc.)
- Video and Social Media Campaign leading up to election day
- Pitt Votes Branding – make it clear that we are all on the same page and reassure the university is committed to spreading the same message in order to create a civically healthy campus climate
- Participated in the ACC collaboration including the creation of an ACC-wide competition and a coalition structure to sharing promising practice across the conference.

#### Ongoing and Completed Action Items, Year 2- Academic Year 2021-2022

- **Launched student ambassador program**
- Worked with TurboVote to oversee a student poll worker initiative in the fall municipal election

- Hosted event during Welcome Week to engage first-year students
- Focused on local and state elections in messaging
- Hosted National Voter Registration Day event and outreach
- Hosted Pledge to Vote competition with Residential Life
- Participated in national programming such as the PA Student Voter Coalition and SLSV Post-Election Gathering
- Directly spoke to over 2,000 students in the fall via tabling, classroom/student organization presentations, etc.
- **Continue to utilize student affairs email blasts and a pop-up on MyPitt that provides voter information and reminders**
- Widely shared 2020 NSLVE Report upon receiving it
- Received gold seal recognition from the ALL In Challenge for 2020 Voting Rates
- Hosted event during Civic Action Week
- **Maintain social media presence and branding**
- **Tailor programing to student populations with lower rates of voter participation**
- **Include a civic engagement session in Resident Assistant training that emphasizes the correct way to complete a voter registration form and information on why it is so important for all students to vote**
- **Integrate voter engagement in Fraternity & Sorority Life**
- **Petition to gain excused absences on Election Day**
- Pitt Votes information and outreach tables during prime times in the dining halls and campus recreation facilities
- Pitt Votes information and outreach tables at various on-campus event (I <3 Pitt Day, Homecoming, Sustainability Fair, etc.)
- A Call to action during major campus events – First-Year Convocation, first home athletic games, homecoming, etc.
- Introduction events for students to political candidates in our local community
- Spokesperson/people – utilize our popular campus leaders to promote voter engagement
- Pitt Votes branding – expanded merchandise in the form of attire, gifts, etc.
- Prepare students for May primary election before the semester ends
- **Plan first-year outreach for the Fall 2022 semester**
- **Create downloadable programs about voter education (including equity issues specifically) that student organization leaders or RAs can download to host their own programs**
- **Start planning for Election Day Fall 2022 programming with PCC**

#### Intended Action Items, Year 3- Academic Year 2022-2023

- Consistent outreach and messaging about engagement in Midterm elections as soon as

students arrive to campus

- Reach out to student organization leaders in August to collaborate throughout September and October and reach their members
- Continue to utilize student affairs email blasts and a pop-up on MyPitt that provides voter information and reminders
- Table in high-traffic areas on campus and during campus-wide events to share voter information
- Build student ambassador program leadership team
- Maintain and build social media presence, Election Day countdown throughout October
- Continue to participate in civic holidays, national programming, etc.
- Collaborating with Allegheny County Elections to host 2<sup>nd</sup> year of student poll-working initiative
- Continue to target first-year students through orientation, first-year programming, and residential life
- Execute second year of residential life pledge to vote competition
- Participate in Civic Action Week
- Give away additional Pitt Votes branded merchandise- shirts, chapsticks, stickers, etc
- Incorporate voter engagement into RA training with residential life
- Incorporate civic education and democratic engagement into the general education curriculum
- A Call to action during major campus events – Athletic Events, Homecoming, etc.
- Impact the class schedule (modified day/half day of classes, excused absences) on Election days so the entire campus can participate
- Election Day Marketplace in front of the WPU
- Tailor programming according to student populations with lower turnout

#### Intended Action Items, Year 4 – Academic Year 2023-2024

- Continue to utilize student affairs email blasts and a pop-up on MyPitt that provides voter information and reminders
- Table in high-traffic areas on campus and during campus-wide events to share voter information
- Continue programming from previous years (Pledge to vote competition, civic holidays, national programming, etc.)
- Expand student ambassador program to over 50 members
- Create new goals based on Midterm 2022 NSLVE data

#### Long-Term Strategies

- Voter registration information submitted to student with acceptance package

- Implement a voter registration as part of the student ID card process
- Survey to find out why students are or aren't voting and why, and potentially what questions they have about the process
- Implement excused absences on Election Day
- Involve community-based voter registration and engagements efforts in the University's ongoing civic engagement work. Partners should regularly be invited to engage with the campus community and build meaningful relationships with the Pitt community
- Ensure a mechanism to measure the staff and faculty organizing and sharing information regarding their own voter registration and engagement efforts

## NSLVE Data

The University of Pittsburgh participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) and approves making the data public through the All In Campus Democracy Challenge. We are grateful to The Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University for all of their work that goes into NSLVE data for well over 1,000 campuses.

Much like academic institutions across the nation, the University of Pittsburgh has made significant strides in increasing voter registration and turnout since the 2012 general election. Additionally, similar to national trends, there are still areas for improvement in each of these categories across primary and general election years.

Based on NSLVE data from the 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections, our focus must be on closing the gap between voter registration and turnout rates along with the gap between voter turnout rates for general and primary elections.

## General Elections

- From 2016 to 2020:
  - Pitt's voter registration rate increased by 3.9% (86.8% to 90.7%)
  - Pitt's voting rate of registered students increased by 10.7% (75.9% to 86.6%)
  - Pitt's **overall voting rate** increased by 12.6% (65.9% to 78.5%)
- The 2020 rate was 12.5% higher than the average for all institution types (66%) and 9.5% higher than the average for similar institution types (69%).
- Pitt's 2020 voting rate of 78.5% signifies an increase of 24.0% from the 2012 voting rate of 54.5%
- Also in 2020:
  - 39% voted in person on election day, 55% voted not in person, and 1% voted early (the remaining 5% have an unknown voting method)
  - Students in the age group of 50+ had the highest voting rate (86%) followed by the age groups of 18-21, 22-24, and 40-49 (74-76%) and the age groups of 25-29 and 30-39 (66% and 62% respectively)
  - Undergraduate students had a higher voting rate of 76% compared to the graduate student voting rate of 68%
  - First year students had the lowest voting rate (60%) out of the undergraduate class years (71% for sophomores, 78% for upper-level)
  - Full-time students had a lower rate (72%) than part-time students (77%)

- Fields of study with the highest voting rates included Area/Ethnic/Cultural/ Gender/Group studies, Public Administration & Social Service Professions, History, and English Language & Literature.
- Fields of study with the lowest voting rates included Parks, Recreation, Leisure, & Fitness Studies, Philosophy & Religious Studies, Mathematics & Statistics, and Computer & Information Sciences

#### Primary Elections

- From 2014 to 2018:
  - Pitt's voter registration rate increased by 18.4% (66% to 84.4%)
  - Pitt's voting rate of registered students increased by 33.7% (22.5% to 56.2%)
  - Pitt's **overall voting rate** increased by 32.6% (14.8% to 47.4%)
- The 2018 rate was 8.9% higher than the national average for all institution types and 9.6% higher than the national average for public institutions
- Also in 2018:
  - 81% voted in person and 15% voted not in person
  - Students in the age group of 50+ had the highest voting rate (74.2%) while youngest age groups had voting rates around 30-35% lower
  - Undergraduate students had a lower rate (40.2%) than graduate students (49.3%)
  - First year students had the lowest voting rate (22.9%) out of the undergraduate class years (34.7% for sophomores, 46.6% for upper-level)
  - Full-time students had a lower rate (40.9%) than part-time students (60.7%)
  - The fields of study with the highest voting rates included legal studies, library science, and public administration/social service. Fields of study with the lowest voting rates included parks/recreation/leisure/fitness studies, law enforcement, and computer/information services

The Pitt Votes initiative will utilize the NSLVE data to help streamline activation and programming. The team will work closely with underrepresented populations of students to assure engagement. Work to support groups with lower turnout such as specific fields of study, age groups, and class years, will be part of this strategy. *Note: The University of Pittsburgh report does not include data breakdowns by race/ethnicity or sex because this data was not reported to IDHE and NSLVE, creating an obstacle for the Pitt Votes initiative to improve voter turnout gaps and engage underrepresented students.*

#### Reporting

In a similar manner to the University-wide practice of including a wide variety of voices in decision-making, the Pitt Votes initiative will seek feedback from students, faculty, staff and other members of the University community on our plan for action. We are committed to receiving input on the Action Plan not only when it is initially published but continually as we work towards our outlined goals.

This will be achieved through the following steps:

- Sharing of the plan internally with the individuals on the Pitt Votes coalition, the Pitt Votes Steering Committee, and the Pitt Votes Student Task Force along with University leadership.
- Providing it for review with the All in Democracy Challenge and the Campus Vote Project.
- Sharing the plan with other internal constitutions upon request.

- Include feedback survey with the publication of the Action Plan on website for anonymous feedback
- Include physical copies or instructions for digital access of 2020 Action Plan at all tabling events and other programming
- Continue to hold forums every three months with the public University community to receive further feedback on initiatives and goal areas

Through the above steps we hope to ensure the Pitt Votes 2020 Action Plan includes the voices of all University communities and creates a space for open dialogue about the points included in the plan.

The Pitt Votes initiative also intends to make NSLVE reports widely available. The most recently published report is published on the Pitt Votes institutional commitment webpage. Whenever an updated NSLVE report is received, the initiative will update the webpage and share it with the individuals on the Pitt Votes coalition, the Pitt Votes Steering Committee, and the Pitt Votes Student Task Force along with University leadership.

#### Evaluation

Comprehensive and continual evaluation of the initiative's efforts to increase voter engagement is key to create successful outcomes that reach further and last longer than a single election cycle. Much like other aspects on this plan, the assessment of the initiative's efforts will take a collaborative approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative data from perspectives across the University campus and beyond in order to understand how a wide array of populations and entities are being impacted.

Communication within the Pitt Votes Coalition, its subgroups, and associated organizations will serve as an evaluation tool. Leadership will conduct timely check-ins with students, coalition members, collaborators, and other stakeholders in order to understand how broad goals are being achieved and adjust accordingly to any challenges that arise. Additionally, the coalition-wide meeting that occurs once per semester will allow a deeper evaluation of all aspects of the action plan to occur.

Beyond Pitt Votes Coalition members, it is important to understand how campus and community partners are responding to the work being done. Members of the Pitt Votes Student Task Force will conduct regular check-ins with student organizations and their leaders to understand how these students are responding to various initiatives. These check-ins will allow open communication in an effort to collaborate on ways to improve on goals or outcomes.

#### Quantitative Assessment Steps

- Analyzing and distributing NSLVE data to gauge overall voter engagement improvement and identify gaps in voter participation on campus
- Tracking student attendance at associated campus events and presentation
- Monitoring engagement with outreach tabling at larger campus events and in high-traffic areas on campus
- Tracking voter registration through TurboVote to assess which programming efforts are most effective
- Collaborating with the County Board of Elections to breakdown student voter turnout rates at on-campus polling locations

## Conclusion

The Pitt Votes initiative considers this a working document with expected additions and changes. Extended strategies will come with the every changing times and the team will remain flexible to assure positive outcomes. The intended outcomes could shift to assure all student needs are being fulfilled.

The Pitt Votes initiative would like to thank all University of Pittsburgh faculty, staff and students that contributed to the creation of this plan and that support voter engagement work on campus.