

University of San Diego All In Challenge Action Plan 2020

Executive Summary

This action plan has been developed by a team that includes students, faculty, student affairs staff, and administrators. It lays out USD's initial action plan for the 2020 primary elections and general election, as required for participation in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge. This team will lead the implementation, in part by recruiting the aid of the many other supportive individuals at USD. It will be implemented between January and November of 2020.

Leadership

The Working Group is composed of volunteers from the College of Arts and Sciences, Student Affairs, other Administrators, and our undergraduate student group. The Working Group will come up with the initial plan, but part of the Group's work will be to recruit and incorporate other campus units into the implementation of the plan. The Working Group will meet when necessary, and otherwise coordinate through email.

The umbrella organization under which voter engagement efforts take place at USD is called USD Votes. It is led by faculty in the Department of Political Science and International Relations. USD Votes plans educational programming around elections, recruits and advises the affiliated USD Votes student group, maintains the www.sandiego.edu/vote website, ensures voter education is accurate and responsible, and helps coordinate other actors on campus. The de facto leader of this group is Casey Dominguez, professor of political science, but a number of faculty in the department support and contribute to this effort.

Elsewhere in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Communications Studies Department and the Humanities Center have also promised to contribute programming to help inform new voters.

USD Votes is also the name of a student-led organization that will be instrumental in planning outreach to students and will be critical to leading peer-to-peer student education and registration campaigns. This group's leader is Linnea Leidy, a senior who participated in the 2018 and 2019 USD Votes campaign. The student executive board also includes Brooke Powell, Kwamena Awotwi, Vivian Mateos Zuniga.

USD Votes' leadership team also includes Pamela Gray Payton, Assistant Vice President for Community, State, and Local Government Relations, and Paula Krist, Director of Institutional Research and Planning

In Student Affairs, Residential Life will take a leadership role in helping to see that students who live on campus are encouraged to register to vote and informed about how to do so.

The University of San Diego is committed to civic engagement broadly, and we want to encourage all members of the USD community, including faculty and staff, to be informed

citizens. We are working to establish relationships with the Committee on Human Resources to reach out to non-student employees of the University.

Working Group membership: Casey Dominguez, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Evan Crawford, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Cory Gooding, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Mike Williams, Director of the Changemaker Hub, Mary Brinson, Department of Communication Studies, Pamela Gray Payton, Assistant Vice President, Community, State, and Local Government Relations, Paula Krist, Director of Institutional Research and Planning, and Linnea Leidy, President of USD Votes.

We also have developed a liaison connection with the San Diego County Registrar of Voters, and with Tracey DeFore in the County of San Diego Communications Office. She has helped us make sure our website's advice to student voters is accurate and consistent with county communications.

Commitment

The University of San Diego's Catholic social mission, public purpose, and commitment to the liberal arts — to foster compassion, active citizenship and to fashion a more humane world — is conveyed in the attitudes, skills and knowledge fostered among its students through myriad curricular and extracurricular activities that range from community engagement and immersion to field-based courses to undergraduate research to social venture design. As one of a few campuses in the world that have earned both the Ashoka Changemaker Campus and the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, USD has demonstrated a sustained and meaningful commitment to civic engagement over the last thirty years. Through the Changemaker Hub, the Mulvaney Center for Community, Awareness, and Social Action, and University Ministry, just to name a few, USD provides students with many co-curricular opportunities to engage on and off campus.

Building on our mission to “advancing academic excellence, expanding liberal and professional knowledge, creating a diverse and inclusive community and preparing leaders who are dedicated to ethical conduct and compassionate service,” USD adopted a new strategic plan in 2016 - Envisioning 2024 - which creates more opportunities for the campus to be involved with community and civic engagement. Envisioning 2024 commits USD to dedicating its resources to addressing the world's most urgent challenges both on and off campus. The USD Votes initiative aligns with the mission and the new strategic vision of the campus.

In 2017, USD implemented its revised Core Curriculum that requires students to demonstrate how to integrate knowledge in order to address social, political, economic and environmental issues. Providing students with the opportunities to understand how political knowledge and civic responsibilities intersect with a variety of issues is one of the goals of the integration learning outcomes.

With our commitment ongoing commitments to changemaking, community engagement, and the liberal arts, as well as the revisions to our Core Curriculum, USD is dedicated to creating a culture that values democratic engagement.

Landscape

Current democratic engagement efforts: For many years, voter education efforts have been focused around elections and have included campus-wide parties on election nights and various informational panel discussions. In 2016, for the first time, there was a sustained effort to register and turn out voters. As we move forward, we hope to consider how to extend voter education through the electoral off-years.

Voter Turnout in prior years: USD participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement, which analyzes voter turnout rates at campuses across the United States. Our NSLVE reports indicate that in the last two presidential elections, our voter turnout was slightly above average for all colleges, and in the last midterm election, our voter turnout was slightly below average. In 2016, USD for the first time mounted a coordinated voter registration campaign, which probably had a small effect on the increase in our voter turnout rate from 2012 to 2016. As is typical for voters nationwide, older students and graduate students vote at higher rates than younger and undergraduate students. A majority of our students vote by mail. Nearly 80% of our students registered, but only 2/3 of those voted in 2016.

In 2018, our efforts were even more apparent. We improved our midterm election rate from 16% in 2014 to 45% in 2018. We went from being 3% below the national average for all colleges and universities to 6% above the national average. We take great pride in those improvements, and think we can make a credible argument that our efforts helped us exceed even the national increases in student voter turnout. In 2018, 65% of our students voted by mail. It would be great to know how many voted in California vs. other states, if NSLVE ever makes that information available. Our student population is made up of only 50% Californians, so we have to do a lot of education just to help students understand where they want to register and vote, and how to do so.

Our NSLVE report also tells us that only 35% of our core undergraduate population voted in 2018, so there is still a great deal of room for improvement with the heart of our student body.

We will use this information as well as other information in our NSLVE report to inform and target our 2020 efforts.

Curriculum and voting: The Core Curriculum does not require students to specifically learn about American politics, history, or democratic political theory. It has a social justice focus in relation to the Catholic nature of the institution. Its goals are to teach critical thinking and expose students to different modes of inquiry. There is also an opportunity - through the integration learning outcomes - for students to understand and apply issues related to democratic engagement.

Internal and external barriers to voting: Our students mostly come to USD from out of the area. So there are a variety of logistical hurdles for our students to either navigate voting at home, or come up to speed about San Diego politics. Those facts increase the information we must be

prepared to provide in support of their electoral engagement. Internally, our student culture has historically been apolitical. Changing that culture will be the biggest challenge.

Resources available: USD's faculty and staff are committed to civic engagement and are used to working with each other on co-curricular, student-focused efforts. If money and manpower are needed, they can probably be acquired.

Resources needed: There are four types of resources needed to increase voter turnout among USD students.

1.) Information. We need to be able to direct students to accurate information about how to register, how to vote, and how to inform themselves about the decisions they confront as voters. For students voting out of their home area, it may help to make them aware of deadlines for requesting and returning their ballots.

2.) Student volunteers. Students will be most engaged if information comes to them laterally through their peers than through a top-down campaign. That effort requires that many students be recruited into the USD Votes campaign and equipped with accurate information and mobilizing messages that they can share.

3.) Various types of financial resources. Money for t shirts, stickers, balloons, flyers, competition awards, etc. will be needed to supplement the broader campaign as we go along.

4.) Staff and administration support. We will need permission to engage in various parts of the campaign--to be part of the move-in weekend activities, to speak to classes, to send bulk emails, to reach students through official channels.

Strategy

The Working Group as currently composed cannot set institutional goals beyond voter turnout and education in each election cycle. Promoting active and informed citizenship more broadly should of course be important to USD, curricular and other strategic decisions about student outcomes need to be made at a higher level.

The short-term goal of this campaign is to focus on voter turnout and electoral engagement. In 2020, we hope to get voter turnout over the 60% mark, in part based on the expectation that national interest in the election will drive voter turnout higher among all groups. Through plans like this one, we hope to develop institutional mechanisms for keeping students registered to vote and helping to keep them engaged and thinking about their responsibilities as democratic citizens. The easy part of this effort, in some respects, is preparing to physically help students register. The harder part is to change the institutional norms and culture so that students do this with less institutional prodding.

Planned activities: Note: While we are actively planning the following events and activities, the information below is subject to change. Final plans will be worked out as time goes on.

Fall: General election initiatives

- Torero Orientation Weekend. While we have had a long term goal of incorporating voter registration into Orientation weekend, the pandemic has completely upended that plan. It is still not clear what form fall Orientation will take. Whatever form that is, it is unlikely that we will be able to get one on one access to incoming students in person. We are currently trying to get a link on the Torero Hub Orientation website, to at least provide voter registration resources to students as they prepare to move to campus.
- National Voter Registration Day. In 2018 and 2019, the USD Votes student group had its single biggest day of in-person voter registration on National Voter Registration Day. We plan to mount this effort again in 2020, if possible with the cooperation of Associated Student Government. While our specific plans are evolving, we aim to have a major digital and on campus push for voter registration on September 22 as we usually do. Even if it's unsafe for us to hold in-person events on campus to promote National Voter Registration Day, we still plan on collaborating with our Associated Student Government to put up signage, posters, and flyers around campus and spreading the word on a variety of USD social media accounts.
- Digital Campaign. We will have a robust digital campaign, including posting information on social media channels across the university, and at least one campus-wide email blast reminding students to get registered, with a link to the sandiego.edu/vote page. We will also advertise on digital screens across campus. We will also have a link to the voter information gateway page (www.sandiego.edu/vote) on the main student portal during the month of February. Planned and executed by USD Votes student volunteers with help from Peter Marlow, Associate Vice President for University Communications, and Kenny Eng, Assistant Director of Technology and Communications for the Division of Student Affairs.
 - Specifically, we hope to have USD Votes/www.sandiego.edu/vote backgrounds for use by students and faculty attending Zoom meetings and classes. We are also working on USD Votes GIFs, Instagram Story Tags, and are looking into encouraging social media competitions. (I'm voting because..., Show us proof that you texted 10 people in your contacts telling them to vote...)
 - Part of our social media strategy will involve encouraging students to follow our USD Votes instagram account, where we post important reminders, relevant election info, club updates, etc. Another focus will be encouraging students to engage with their own friends and followers because we recognize that pressure coming from within one's inner circle is an extremely effective incentive to vote. Thus, many of our social media contests will encourage our followers to tag, text, etc. their friends who are not already following our instagram account, because that will serve as an effective way to reach students on USD's campus who we haven't already made contact with.

- We will make four major digital pushes to get students registered and turned out to vote:
 - National Voter Registration Day; September 22
 - California Voter Registration Deadline; October 19
 - Vote Early Day; October 4
 - Election Day; November 3

- Out of State Student Emails. We will work with Admissions and out of state student Ambassadors to send those students particular information about their voting choices--registering, absentee voting, primary election dates and rules--for the 2020 presidential primaries. We are looking into creating state-specific video guides for students in each state.

- LLC competitions after school begins USD has five living-learning communities for first year students, plus one for transfer students. They are composed of students who live in the same area and who take classes that touch on a theme. If logistics can be worked out, a competition among the LLCs to register the most voters could be a great motivator for voter registration. Logistics need to be worked out; implementation in September.

- Alcala Bazaar and on-campus volunteer tabling. We do not know what student group orientations will look like in Fall, but will consider participating if it is safe to do so.

- Classroom presentations. In past campaigns, a large portion of our efforts involved classroom presentations, when USD Votes volunteers would visit different classes and deliver a short informational speech about voting dates and logistics, while also passing out and collecting registration forms. We do not know what classes will look like in Fall, but we are prepared to move this strategy online by “Zoom bombing.” We will contact faculty to coordinate having a USD Votes volunteer join their Zoom lecture and take the first five minutes to present voting info to students. In place of passing out and collecting registration forms, we will emphasize the websites students should seek out to register themselves or check their registration status.

- Registration presentation to Athletic Teams. It is unclear what will happen with athletic teams or whether it will be possible to register them in person.

- Greek Life Registration Competition. We are evaluating the possibility of putting together a registration competition.

- Student-led groups associated with the United Front Multicultural Center. USD Votes student volunteers will reach out digitally to each student group on campus (especially groups of which our volunteers are members) and offer to make a presentation about why and how members of that group should register to vote.

- Faculty/Curriculum involvement. Professors. Dominguez, Crawford, Williams, and Brinson will develop emails targeting faculty that inform them what they can do to encourage their students to register and vote. Faculty in each school can be provided with an informational email at the start of the fall semester telling them about the All In Challenge and what they can do to inform their students. Department chairs in the college can also be encouraged to include specific voter mobilization messages in the mass emails that go out to their majors.
- Voice of San Diego's Politifest. The nonprofit San Diego news organization, Voice of San Diego, will hold its third annual Politifest on October 3. Students will be able to attend virtually for free and to learn about ballot measures, local San Diego and statewide races.
- Employee Engagement The Community of Human Resources Committee (CHR) will help promote USD Votes to departments across campus, recruit volunteers to support student participation and disseminate information

Reporting and Evaluation

We will post this plan, as well as the campus NSLVE reports, to the sandiego.edu/vote webpage and share the links with administrators and faculty as widely as possible. This plan will inevitably evolve as we find new partners on campus and as we cast aside some initial plans in favor of others.

All participating individuals and campus units will be requested to share attendance numbers, voter registration numbers, and planned events with the USD Votes leadership (Dr. Dominguez) so that the campaign can be fully documented and evaluated.

As volunteers help students to register to vote, we will keep a running tally of the number of students newly registered, so that we can know for the future which events are most effective at increasing registration rates. The USD Votes campaign, which will be primarily responsible for peer-to-peer student outreach, will keep track of how many students are registered at sponsored events and canvassing sessions. Residential life will keep track of how many students are registered by its staff and RAs, and if a competition is put into place, how many students are registered by each LLC.

For final data, of course, we will look forward to the NSLVE report to see whether our overall efforts have taken us not only over our benchmark, but whether we have moved further than similar institutions. Political Science faculty will be primarily responsible for keeping track of these data and analyzing the effectiveness of each aspect of the campaign. A post-election effectiveness report will be posted to the USD Votes website and shared by email with members of the Working Group and others who express an interest in the campaign.

This plan, its modifications, and data on its effectiveness, will be shared with the new and old team members who will be organizing for the 2022 USD Votes campaign.