

Campus Action Plan

VoteSC

May 2020



Written By:

Amanda Li and Christian Burks - VoteSC Co-Presidents '20-'21 and Emily Caruso - VoteSC

Vice President

Reviewed By:

VoteSC Executive Board '20-'21

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEADERSHIP

COMMITMENT

LANDSCAPE

GOALS

STRATEGY

REPORTING & EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Action Plan serves as a guide for VoteSC's new leadership to build upon the work of the past leadership that founded the club. It adds clarity to the work that has been done while establishing some tangible goals to advance our efforts as an organization. In the scenario where USC remains online during Fall 2020, we will be doing our work exclusively online, but if we are allowed to return to campus most of our work will occur on and around USC's campus, but we will make a point to incorporate various outside partners. This will include initiatives that work alongside other college organizations and national organizations. After the work of the past leadership, VoteSC is finally off the ground and we are entering a major election year so it is vital there is a strong plan in place so that our efforts are effective.

LEADERSHIP

VoteSC along with the Center for the Political Future (USC's Institute of Politics within the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences) are the main groups coordinating democratic engagement efforts at USC. VoteSC is made up of an executive board that includes Amanda Li and Christian Burks as Co-Presidents, Emily Caruso as Vice President, Riya Mehta as the Director of Social Media & Marketing, Paola Morales and Hailey Irwin as Co-Directors of Programming, and Hannah Franco and Erica Noll as Co-Directors of Outreach. The responsibilities of each member is outlined in our organization's constitution. In addition to our executive board, we have general members that have been recruited to volunteer at our larger-scale events. In the past, our executive board has met once a week, with general member meetings being held as needed, however in the future we will be transitioning to more frequent and regularly held meetings with our volunteers to better coordinate our efforts in advance of the 2020 election. Additionally, we've made it a priority to be at any necessary partnership meetings on and around campus to strengthen relationships with our coalition members (listed below). Additionally, we are in the process of establishing regular newsletter and email updates to share with our coalition members as well as our general members.

Coalition Members

Internal (Within USC):

The Center for the Political Future	Trojans for Liberty
Political Student Assembly	Trojans for Israel
Undergraduate Student Government	USC Hillel
Student Assembly for Gender Empowerment	Students for Justice in Palestine
Environmental Student Assembly	Unruh Associates
Black Student Assembly	Academic Culture Assembly
Asian Pacific American Student Assembly	Phi Alpha Delta (Pre-Law Fraternity)
Latinx Student Assembly	Society of Women in the Law
Queer and Ally Student Assembly	Residential Housing Association
International Student Assembly	USC Graduate School of Social Work
Graduate Student Government	USC JEP (Joint Education Project)
USC College Democrats	Campus Activities (Gabe Valenzuela -Houses USG))
Trojan Advocates for Political Progress	USC Office of Civic Engagement
USC GOP	Price School of Public Policy (Dean Knott)

External:

LA County Registrar (Jeff Klein and Dean Logan)
USC Office of Civic Engagement
CA Secretary of State's Office (Lizette Matta)
Young Invincibles
Democracy Works (Turbo Vote)
All In Challenge

COMMITMENT

The Center for the Political Future serves as USC's main department on campus focused on civic engagement, and as such is one of our key partners for on campus activities. The center hosts events and conferences designed to create civil dialogue across partisan lines. It also helps connect students to scholarships and internships through public service and civic engagement. USC also has an office of Civic Engagement, which specializes in efforts relating to volunteering and supporting local community members, their business, and community organizations. We have made strides in building a relationship with them, and they have shown significant support of our work, but traditionally they haven't done much in the realm of voting. As such, we are currently working with them to build a more

extensive partnership that will allow us to expand our reach into the local community. Overall, our University's mission statement and core values documents acknowledge its role in the community, but as of now, there aren't many tangible efforts in the realm of civic and democratic engagement. However, the development of VoteSC over the past few years has helped make strides in ensuring civic engagement and voting rights at large remain prominent within the conscience of the University administration, though the COVID19 crisis has shifted the University's priorities, at least for the moment.

LANDSCAPE

Within USC, there is a limited presence of civic learning and democratic engagement in our curriculum. Most efforts related to these causes are seen outside of the classroom. For example, the Center for the Political Future actively provides students with internship and scholarship opportunities, and there are numerous political organizations on campus. Many of these organizations on campus are a part of VoteSC's coalition and some of them have their own civic engagement efforts (i.e. Trojan Advocates for Political Progress - Phone Banking, Canvassing, rallies; College Dems - Invite local representatives to their weekly meetings, canvassing, rallies). At the same time however, there is cause for concern when considering the students that are reached by these organizations. Not only is there overlapping participation within many of these organizations, but many of the participants have a political, public service, or government related major (i.e. Political Science, International Relations, Philosophy, Politics, and Law, Public Policy, etc.), while students of apolitical majors tend to show significantly less engagement.

However, it is not that the University has been explicitly opposed to civic engagement efforts. Rather, the main internal obstacles have been the changes within the University's administration since the beginning of 2019, which resulted in a new University President, Provost, and Vice President of Student Affairs. In addition to the main leadership, many campus departments have undergone internal leadership changes. Given that many of our key partners are getting familiar with their positions, adding additional work has been difficult. Additionally, initiatives within the colleges can often be siloed across university departments. In these cases one department's work has gone unseen by other related

campus groups and departments, so we are being careful about our communication efforts to avoid this.

Of course, our ability to coordinate with the USC administration and engage in traditional civic engagement events faces unprecedented circumstances due to the COVID19 pandemic. Regardless of whether USC returns to class in the fall in person (with or without restrictions) or continues to be online, the priorities of much of the administration have understandably shifted towards managing the University's efforts and response to the pandemic. This means any civic engagement efforts are likely to take a backseat or be outright tabled for the time being, complicating our ability to effectively communicate and coordinate with the administration. Like other student-led organizations across the country, our prior plans for the fall are clouded in uncertainty, and our eboard is taking the time this summer to plan specific strategies for the different scenarios possible for the fall as thoroughly as possible.

As far as external barriers, our main problem has been re-establishing a polling location on our campus. The recent shift to extensive voting centers in California have presented new challenges in terms of space and money. Our campus is limited on venue spaces that would be appropriate for housing a polling location. The one space we have has a limited availability and is costly. We are looking to get these fees waived/covered but we have seen little success thus far in meeting with the new VP of Student Affairs who would help with this, and the COVID19 pandemic has made such a meeting less likely in the imminent future.

In terms of our campus demographics, USC's unique international and out of state problems leads us to face unique challenges in regards to encouraging voting or civic engagement. For our international students ineligible to vote and often distanced from the tangible impact of U.S. politics, this is a particularly difficult problem for us. We have to regularly examine our efforts to ensure that we are inclusive and fostering engagement despite them not voting, whether it be through holding programming centered on civically informing and engaging international students with the local community or recruiting them as volunteers for other events. Additionally, about 40% of our students come from

out-of-state and we have to be ready to accommodate each of their voting needs. This can include addressing barriers that aren't present for in-state voters (i.e. early deadlines, stamp needs, ballot notarization, etc.). Additionally, California's same day in-person voter registration laws ease our ability to accommodate for out-of-state students.

GOALS

As a nonpartisan student organization, VoteSC seeks to make voting more accessible to students by removing barriers and increasing the information available on voting, elections and civic engagement as well as to promote a campus culture of voter awareness, education, registration and turnout. Our mission is to increase voter turnout and campus civic engagement on campus.

Continuous/Long Term Goals:

- We want students to know the importance of voting.
- We want students to be registered to vote, if eligible.
- We want students to make voting a priority, and cultivate a culture of voting on campus.
- We want to continue to develop ways to incorporate students who aren't eligible to vote
- We want to remedy any challenges students have for voting. (i.e. ballot notarization, stamps, general confusion around the process, etc.)
- We want our efforts to be inclusive of faculty, staff, and surrounding community members. (USC is one of the largest employers in Los Angeles and is located in an extremely diverse community, so it's important that we don't limit our outreach or resources to just students. At the same time this is something that campus partners and local organizations can help with.)
- We want to raise our registration and Voting Rate
- We want to have voter registration institutionalized through orientation, class registration, housing, or some form of regular student life
- We want to expand our coalition to be more inclusive, especially of underrepresented communities

Short Term Goals:

- Get an accessible and prominent vote center on campus
- Cement our partnership with Student Affairs
- Increase institutionalization through Welcome Week and Orientation Activities that will encourage new students to register to vote upon arriving on campus

- Expand our outreach to the graduate student population and Health Science Campus
- Strengthen our partnership with Athletics
- Host programming with the focus of making our coalition be more inclusive, especially of underrepresented communities and apolitical majors
- Host “Voting 101” and other educational and engaging events to reduce voter apathy and resolve misconceptions and concerns about voting
- In the event of an online semester, encourage the University to send an email outlining how students can still vote or what their status is
- Increase student awareness of the nature of California’s vote centers (i.e. you can vote across several days rather than just on election day)
- Increase student awareness about the ability of mail-in or absentee ballots to quell potential fears of voting in the context of a pandemic

Many of these goals are specifically outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding we shared with our University President, Dr. Carol Folt in September and Jack Knott, Dean of the Price School of Public Policy. Dean Knott was the first campus administrator to support our early efforts in 2018 and Dr. Folt is a new supporter of our efforts.

Voter Registration

- Achieve 90% voter registration for eligible students and 90% turnout for all eligible students by Jan. 2021
- Create campus-wide voting initiative, comprised of various and diverse representatives, that expands a voting challenge to peer universities and supports community-based voter engagement outside of campus

Creating a Voting Coalition

- Expand campus voting coalition to encompass more student organizations and campus departments to solicit more feedback and to access more students
- Create VoteSC Advisory Board comprised of USC faculty and administrators to coordinate efforts and leverage connections and communication and to convene all the disparate USC schools
- Form partnership with USC Athletics to engage student athletes and incorporate voting into campus culture
- Work with USC administration to send out campus-wide email blasts, incorporating voting into courses and orientations, and otherwise institutionalize and expand voting efforts, such as through hosting our Turbovote link on the myUSC widget
- Participate and work with the PAC 12 Voting Challenge that would encourage other schools within the PAC 12 Conference to increase their voter registration and civic

engagement efforts, using the University of Michigan's Big 10 Challenge as a template

- Expand voting engagement to local community (through collaboration with the Office of Civic Engagement at USC) through working with community organizations and schools to provide educational materials and pre-register students to vote
- Work with Graduate Student Government and other partners to better reach graduate populations

Organizational Goals

- Expand social media presence and incorporate educational and motivational materials, such as voter testimonials and infographics
- Begin to meet more frequently with general members and expand our volunteer base
- Establish a culture of civic engagement among students, faculty, staff, and community members through integration into basic school/community functions
- Meet potential voters where they naturally congregate through year-round outreach at pre-existing events
- Become a consistent presence across prominent campus spaces

STRATEGY

Events and Activities in the Works:

- Voter Registration Drives (in Spring and Fall Semesters, and on both campuses)
- Establishing a Polling Location on Campus
- Campus Wide Emails and VoteSC Newsletter
- Social Media Campaigns - i.e. Voting Deadlines, How to Register, What is the Census, etc.
- Weekly Tabling on Trousdale and Office Hours with VoteSC for students that have more questions about the voting process
- Classroom, Club Meeting, and Cultural Center visits and pitches
- Special Edition of the Daily Trojan - An insert in our campus newspaper with voting resources and FAQs
- Election Countdown on the Media Wall in Wallis Annenberg Hall (School of Communications and Journalism)
- General Election Watch Party with the Center for the Political Future
- Create a Voting Month template for RA's to use in campus dorms
- Partnership with Office of Civic Engagement to reach surrounding community
- Establishing a curriculum for JEP to share with local high schools to help them plan registration drives and start voting organizations on their campus

All of these projects will be planned and staffed by VoteSC's executive board and general members. Some projects will be collaborations with current or future partners, and our efforts will not strictly be limited to those listed above.

REPORTING & EVALUATION

Most of our marketing and reporting will occur on social media and through our website. Currently we are sharing select NSLVE statistics through social media, but we hope to have also update our website with that information. We also have data available from our partners at TurboVote, which is shared in our social channels and newsletters to stakeholders as a motivator to continue the efforts to expand voting accessibility on campus throughout the run-up to the 2020 election. As touched on earlier, we are also establishing a newsletter strategy to effectively keep in touch with our partners and coalition members, with several different newsletters targeting different groups in order to ensure we are reaching our audiences as best we can. One newsletter will be weekly, to share with general members and interested students opportunities to get involved with VoteSC. Another will be a bi-weekly newsletter to share with coalition members and a monthly newsletter to share with campus administrators and outside organizations to update them on our progress and encourage them to get involved with VoteSC.

Evaluation of our efforts will be carried out by a committee made up of the involved stakeholders. The leadership of VoteSC will sit on the committee, alongside with representatives of campus partners such as the President's Office and the Center for the Political Future, and invites may be sent to other stakeholder partners that operate off-campus. The purpose of this committee is to evaluate the progress on VoteSC's stated goals as outlined above and provide guidance on how to best move forward. The committee will review efforts after each election, and use these meetings to develop strategies to tackle voting on campus for the subsequent election. The information gathered and discussed will serve to inform USC's decision-making needs on how to best aid students in voting on campus, and how to encourage a higher registration and turnout rate.

Some methods of data collection and metrics that VoteSC has used thus far include a Qualtrics survey distributed via departmental emails, TurboVote analytics, as well as the top-line data provided by the NSLVE report. In the future, VoteSC aims to have more direct data, as we are currently working on a partnership with several on-campus departments to better source our data. Significantly, we aim to understand for future election cycles why students are or are not voting, what the biggest barriers they face to voting on campus are, and the demographic data that can inform how we deploy our efforts to register students to vote.

As outlined in our goals, our performance indicators are mainly in the percentage increase in registered students and students turning out to vote. We have lofty goals in place, and are hoping that our concerted efforts will help us achieve them in the run-up to the 2020 election. Results will be available on our website, social media, and newsletter push.