Campus Action Plan

VoteSC

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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 in 2018. It adds clarity to the work that has been done while establishing some tangible goals to advance our efforts as an organization. At the moment, our top priority is creating a broader voting infrastructure on campus that goes beyond election years. Currently, civic engagement and buy-in from students, student organizations, and campus administrators is dedicated primarily towards Presidential elections. While the 2020 election turnout numbers on campus were encouraging, it is important to sustain this momentum and institutionalize voting on campus to ensure a long-term culture of civic engagement is curated. VoteSC is aiming to do this through projects such as securing a vote center on campus for midterm elections, ensuring election day is a school holiday, and integrating voter registration programming in orientation for new students. VoteSC will continue to work with its campus and outside partners to realize such initiatives.

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 Hailey Irwin and Christian Burks as Co-Presidents, Hannah Franco as Vice President, Kevina Collins as the Director of Marketing and Social Media, and Clayton Gasho and Natasha Tieu as the Directors of External Affairs. 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 we are considering how to best transition to more frequent and regularly held meetings with our volunteers to better coordinate and involve the general student body in our efforts--particularly when it comes closer to election season. 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 have established

regular newsletter and email updates to share with our coalition members as well as our general members. These join our social media pages (which have been thoroughly developed out of necessity during the virtual learning environment during the COVID-19 pandemic) as the best ways to keep in touch with our organization

Coalition Members (as of Fall 2021):
Internal (Within USC):

The Center for the Political Future
Political Student Assembly
Undergraduate Student Government
Student Assembly for Gender Empowerment
Environmental Student Assembly
Black Student Assembly
Asian Pacific American Student Assembly
Latinx Student Assembly
Queer and Ally Student Assembly
International Student Assembly
Graduate Student Government
Trojan Democrats
USC GOP

Trojans for Liberty
Trojans for Israel
USC Hillel
Students for Justice in Palestine
Unruh Associates
Academic Culture Assembly
Phi Alpha Delta (Pre-Law Fraternity)
Society of Women in the Law
Residential Housing Association
USC Graduate School of Social Work
USC JEP (Joint Education Project)
Campus Activities
USC Office of Civic Engagement
Price School of Public Policy

External:
LA County Registrar
CA Secretary of State's Office
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 haven't focused on the issue 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, there have been significant strides in ensuring civic engagement and voting rights remain within the conscience of the University administration. In advance of the 2020 election, VoteSC, student athletics services, and other campus organizations partnered to lobby campus administrators (including the President) to be active in promoting and offering resources to students in advance of the election. These efforts led to campus-wide emails sent by the President sharing voter registration and election information as well as the establishment of an official on-campus vote center--clear reflections that civic engagement was a point of emphasis for USC administration in Fall 2020. Building on and sustaining this momentum even in non-election years has been a critical task for VoteSC this year.

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 Democrats invite local representatives to their weekly meetings, canvassing, rallies). 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 opposed to civic engagement efforts. Rather, as we highlighted earlier, USC's administration was a strong ally in our efforts related to the 2020 election. Though they have not been as consistent as partners in the following year, there is still reason to be encouraged. Many campus departments have undergone internal leadership changes, and many of these new partners have been receptive to our efforts. This signals a broader culture shift within campus leadership favoring civic engagement as a priority for the university. 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.

In the upcoming spring semester, we will shift focus to re-establishing a polling location on our campus for the primary elections for the 2022 midterms. Our campus is limited on venue spaces that would be appropriate for housing a polling location, but past partnerships can be leveraged to establish a prominent location. Additionally, outreach efforts will be especially crucial, given the typical drop in turnout associated with both midterm and primary elections. There will need to be vigilant promotion of both the election and the vote center to encourage student participation.

In terms of our campus demographics, USC's unique international and out of state problems lead 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 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 have voter registration institutionalized through orientation, class registration, on-campus 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
- 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 (though these changes have been in place since the 2020 election)

Many of these goals are specifically outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding we shared with our University President, Dr. Carol Folt.

Voter Registration

- Achieve 90% voter registration for eligible students and 90% turnout for all eligible students by the 2024 Presidential Election
- 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
- 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.
- In semesters with an election: 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
- Partner with campus registration platform to create a mandatory "hold" requiring students to acknowledge the voter registration resources available to them

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 also

update our website with that information. We also have data available from our partners at TurboVote, who we recently re-signed with as our voter registration platform. As touched on earlier, we are also engaging in 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. During election season, 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. We are still determining the best approach during semesters with no approaching election.

Evaluation of our efforts will be carried out by various involved stakeholders. The leadership of VoteSC will arrange meetings with representatives of campus partners such as the President's Office and the Center for the Political Future, as well as other stakeholder partners that operate off-campus. The purpose is to evaluate the progress on VoteSC's stated goals as outlined above and provide guidance on how to best move forward. The meetings will review efforts after each election and 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. Above all, during future election cycles we aim to understand 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 2022 elections that are fast approaching.