University of Tampa Action Plan

Background

The University of Tampa is committed to the development of each student to become productive and responsible citizens according to the institutional mission statement. Our educational approach balances "learning by thinking" with "learning by doing." The Spartan Ready® definition also speaks to our commitment of preparing our graduates "to be leaders who contribute to society."

Previous Voting Rates

Based on the 2018 NSLVE Report, UT's voting rate was 26.5 percent, this was an increase of 15.4 percent from 2014. The UT community including the President and Board of Trustees Chair were excited to see this change.

According to the 2016 NSLVE Report, UT's voting rate was 38.2 percent, this was an increase of 0.9 percent from 2012.

Short-Term Goals

Coalition

Our first short-term goal is to formulate a coalition. Over the past few years, we have made significant strides in providing programming and education for civic engagement.   We have operated as a smaller group informally and now we look forward to developing a formal coalition, which would include representation from across the campus and some members from the Tampa Bay community.

Leadership

- Ian McGinnity
  Director, Office of Student Leadership and Engagement
- Dr. Mary Anderson
  Professor, Political Science and International Studies

Coalition (University of Tampa)

- Tim Harding
  Associate Dean, Career Development and Engagement
- Faculty member
  College of Arts and Letters
- Faculty member
  College of Natural and Health Sciences
- Faculty member
  College of Social Sciences, Mathematics and Education
- Faculty Member
  Sykes College of Business
- Alumni Relations Representative

- UT Alumnus/Alumna
- Student Coordinator
  Office of Student Leadership and Engagement
- Student Government Representative

Coalition (External Partners)

- Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections Representative
- City of Tampa Mayor's Office Representative

Coalition Meetings

- We are planning our first meeting for Friday, Jan. 24, 2020. This is during the first week of classes and we want to send an invitation out to potential members before Winter Break. Based on the membership and their feedback, we could have meetings at least twice each semester.

Tentative Calendar of Events

Our next goal is to provide the following opportunities for students. The events are modeled after our programming from 2016, which was the first time Political Science and International Studies and Student Leadership and Engagement (more broadly an Academic department and a Student Affairs department) intentionally collaborated for a Presidential Election year.

- January to October 2020 – Monthly voter registration by Supervisor of Elections in Vaughn Center
- February 2020 – Information sent to students about Presidential Primary in March
- March 17, 2020 – Presidential Primary Voting in Florida
- August 2020 – New Student Voter Registration during Week of Welcome
- September 17, 2020 – Constitution Day Event
- September 22, 2020 – National Voter Registration Day Event
- September 29, 2020 – Presidential Debate 1 Watch Party
- October 2020 – Information sent to students about Presidential Election in November
- October 5, 2020 – General Election Deadline (Florida)
- October 7, 2020 – Vice Presidential Debate Watch Party
- October 15, 2020 – Presidential Debate 2 Watch Party
- October 22, 2020 – Presidential Debate 3 Watch Party
- November 3, 2020 – Presidential Election
- November 3, 2020 – Presidential Election Results Watch Party
- Faculty presentations to address current affairs, political engagement and issues related to self and society.
- Additionally, we know there will be events that arise throughout the election cycle that will be added as unanticipated events.
- Social media can be utilized through Student Leadership and Engagement's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts. In addition, UT's Instagram, managed by Public Information, can be a tool.
- Engage UT, the co-curricular management software, can also assist with these efforts with events students can RSVP to as well as banner advertisements.

Additional initiatives:

- Create website for students to easily find election resources.
- Distribute nonpartisan materials prepared by national organizations.
- In student media outlets, highlight issues relevant to young voters.

Voting Rate

Our goal is to increase the voting rate from our 2016 NSLVE report. When Mary, Tim and I met to determine the direction of this proposal, we were hesitant to list a specific figure. We had a lower rate in 2018 (midterm election year) than 2016 (presidential election year), which is the norm in American politics. Since we are new to the All In Challenge, we would appreciate any feedback on a reasonable goal to set.

Long-Term Goals

We have proposed the creation of The Institute for Community Engagement and Responsible Citizenship (ICERC) to bring synergy to new and existing service learning and co-curricular community engagement experiences to more widely and strategically develop informed, responsible and actively engaged student citizens. Unfortunately, budget considerations prevent this for the 2020-2021 academic year but we hope it could exist in the future. Nonetheless, we will continue to pursue this long-term goal.

Reporting

This plan will be shared with all members of the coalition as well as stakeholders in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. We would like to create a better web presence for these initiatives and as mentioned above, utilizing social media.

Evaluation

We would like to know if our civic engagement efforts are effective in increasing student participation in the areas of voter registration, education, and participation. We would like the evaluation to give us information that will help us continue to improve student civic engagement, build stronger coordination for civic engagement efforts among faculty and staff, and help us advocate for this work to become a University-wide priority that is supported with some institutional resources.

The coalition will lead the evaluation process, building on what we have already started. We will continue to consider attendance at events, implement evaluations at events, and work with NSLVE and our local elections board to get data on voting rates. We plan to gather information throughout the process, and adjust programming and outreach based on the data we receive.