

## Outline

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Leadership
- III. Institutional Commitment
- IV. Landscape
  - A. Regular Activities
  - B. Involvement of civic engagement in the university programming
  - C. UT Austin demographics
  - D. Voting Laws
    1. And responses
- V. Goals
- VI. Strategy
- VII. NSLVE (not released yet)
- VIII. Reporting
- IX. Evaluation

### **Executive Summary**

Sarah Batson, TX Votes Program Coordinator, and Scott Poole, President of TX Votes, developed this action plan. This plan is designed for The University of Texas at Austin and intended to apply from 2024 to 2025. The activities described will be directed by staff at The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life over the next election cycle. This plan will serve as a checkpoint to ensure coalition partners at UT Austin are aware of our commitments and are making progress towards our goals in a thoughtful and informed manner. This plan also sets the stage for increased participation from more partners which represent more diverse student interests, by providing an updated look at our efforts to start discussions on how best to collaborate on a sustained basis and increase the equity of student access to the polls at UT Austin.

## **Leadership**

The current efforts on campus to increase student voting are coordinated and led by TX Votes which works within The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life. The coalition partners we work with on a regular basis are the student organizations in the civic engagement alliance and the university departments described below. These partners reach different corners of campus and help support the diverse UT Austin student body at various stages of the voting process.

**TX Votes:** TX Votes is a student-led civic engagement organization that works to increase electoral participation at the University of Texas at Austin. TX Votes is committed to nonpartisanship and is sponsored by a university institute, which allows the organization to coordinate the efforts of civic engagement organizations on campus that lack access to university institutions because of their advocacy work or partisanship.

**The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life:** The mission of the Annette Strauss Institute is to create more voters and better citizens. The Strauss Institute is housed in the Moody College of Communication and benefits from the nationally-renowned research conducted by UT Austin faculty and staff. ASI staff provide integral support to TX Votes and serve as the main institutional partner working to increase electoral participation among students, faculty and staff at the University of Texas at Austin.

**Civic Engagement Alliance (CEA):** The Civic Engagement Alliance is a coalition of student organizations working to encourage students to be civically engaged. TX Votes has focused on increasing sustained participation among student organizations, especially those that represent BIPOC students, STEM students, and members of Greek life. TX Votes leadership cultivated close relationships with other civic engagement organizations, including TX Rising, MOVE Texas, Hook the Vote, the University Democrats and Texas PIRG Student Action. This has created robust and ongoing collaboration that has strengthened on-campus voter registration efforts.

Student organizations at UT Austin that currently participate in the CEA include: the American Society of Civil Engineers, The Texas Orator, Engineering LGBTQies, the UT Student Government Women's Resource Agency, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), the Communication Council, Seva Charities, the Liberal Arts Council, BridgeTexas, Texas Sunshines, the Education Council, Socks for the Sole, Texas Lassos, Partners in Health Engage at UT Austin, the Public Relations Student Society of America (Texas PRSSA), Engineers for a Sustainable World, Absolute Texus, Texas Rising, MOVE Texas, the University Democrats, Hook the Vote, and Texas PIRG Student Action.

Current on-campus civic engagement efforts at UT Austin are decentralized. Because there is no high level institution that coordinates all voter registration and civic engagement efforts, TX Votes and the Annette Strauss Institute cultivate relationships with staff from different university offices and academic departments. Some university staff have the time, resources, and desire to incorporate civic engagement curriculum into their programming. Partners relevant to programming in the past year are outlined below.

#### University Department Partners

University Housing and Dining (UHD)

Naomi Semb-Lovejoy - Assistant Director for Residence Life

[naomi.semblovejoy@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:naomi.semblovejoy@austin.utexas.edu)

#### UT Libraries

Sarah Brandt - Librarian for First-Year Programs

[s.brandt@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:s.brandt@austin.utexas.edu)

The Office of the First-Year and Transfer Student Experience

Dr. Patricia Moran - Assistant Dean

[patty@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:patty@austin.utexas.edu)

The Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs

Kate Carpenter - Graduate Student Assistant

[katecarpenter@utexas.edu](mailto:katecarpenter@utexas.edu)

#### Faculty

Because of its nonpartisan credibility, TX Votes has a strong relationship with faculty and is the only organization that professors allow in their classrooms. TX Votes worked with 25 professors and registered 143 students in classes during the fall of 2023.

#### Outside Organizations

League of Women Voters Austin-Area

Grace Chimene - Communication Chair of the LWV Austin Area

[grace@chimene.com](mailto:grace@chimene.com)

Travis County Voter Registration Division

Bruce Elfant - Voter Registrar

[Bruce.Elfant@traviscountytexas.gov](mailto:Bruce.Elfant@traviscountytexas.gov)

Margaret Pettersson - Voter Engagement Coordinator

[Margaret.Pettersson@traviscountytexas.gov](mailto:Margaret.Pettersson@traviscountytexas.gov)

## **Commitment**

Starting with the overarching university value of responsibility, there are many ways that units of the university help promote a culture of civic participation and encourage students to engage politically, in voting and beyond. These selected sub-units of the university are the most directly involved in incorporating voting into their student focused programming or encouraging the requisite civil dialogue and culture to promote political participation on campus. This work is reflected in their mission statements and values listed publicly. In addition to these mission statements, a description of their work and how it demonstrates this commitment is below.

### **The University of Texas at Austin**

Core Value: Responsibility — To serve as a catalyst for positive change in Texas and beyond

The University at the highest level only occasionally communicates about political engagement opportunities for students. In the past several years they have put up social media posts about voting, but not consistently. They have never reached out to the Annette Strauss Institute about their efforts or about decisions regarding polling places on campus. The President of UT Austin is a signatory of the All In Campus Democracy Challenge President's Commitment, but has never publicly announced this.

### **University Housing and Dining**

Mission: To cultivate learning communities that foster student engagement, growth and success

Vision: To create transformative living and learning environments where students feel safe, involved and inspired to change the world

UHD provides students resources and opportunities to participate in civic life. It explicitly includes civic participation and dialogue in its learning outcomes of community engagement and cultural competency. During the 2022-2023 Learning and Outcomes Survey, 70.6% of residents reported they were better able to participate in civic life as a result of their time as a UHD resident.

### **UT Undergraduate College, including first-year and transfer-year experience**

Mission: The Undergraduate College's mission is to propel academic success and holistic development throughout the educational journey at UT and beyond.

Vision: The vision is to transform the student educational experience so that students can change the world.

The Undergraduate College at UT Austin provides a breadth of knowledge that prepares students to adapt and cope with the rapid change that exists today and produces responsible citizens and future leaders. As the stewards of the core curriculum and the core objectives set by the Texas

Higher Education Coordinating Board, they must ensure that the core objective of Social Responsibility is embedded in core classes. Social Responsibility is defined to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities. These classes include first year specific courses which help create a cohesive and introductory experience for new students.

### **UT Libraries**

Mission: The University of Texas Libraries advances teaching, catalyzes research, and democratizes learning in order to develop critical thinkers and global citizens.

Value: Collaboration – We build strong and meaningful partnerships on campus and beyond.

The UT Libraries have consistently folded educational resources on voting and civic participation into the resources they provide to students. This includes online lib guides and access to registration forms and voting guides in the many library locations around campus. They promote this content online and partner with TX Votes to include additional opportunities for the students they serve to register to vote and get information about voting.

The following subunits promote civic culture on campus through service opportunities, public dialogue, and events that center civic holidays and occasions. As a collection they help create a culture on campus that is more supportive of students voting and participating in the political system.

### **Center for Community Engagement**

Mission: CCE envisions a world in which all students become lifelong active citizens, participating in their communities however they can toward the goal of positive social change.

Vision: We envision a world where all people are active citizens.

### **Patman Center for Civic and Political Engagement**

Mission: Strengthen our democracy by cultivating skilled leaders who exemplify an ethos of civility, service, and bipartisanship.

Focus: Providing students with extensive leadership training in a bipartisan environment, a working knowledge of our democratic government and opportunities for experiential learning, internships, and political mentoring.

### **UT Office of the Dean of Students**

Strategic Priority: Maximizing the Longhorn experience for all students through engagement and creating community that leverages the uniqueness of living the Longhorn life.

**Civitas Institute**

Values: Independent thought, civil discourse, free speech, reasoned deliberation and intellectual curiosity

Focus: A community of scholars committed to exploring the ideas and institutions that sustain a free society and enable individuals to flourish

**The Athenaeum at the UT School of Law**

Mission: Promote civil discourse, reasoned dialogue, and the value of dissent.

## **Landscape**

### **Student Demographics**

#### Enrollment (Fall 2023)

Undergraduate students: 42,444

Graduate students: 9,469

Total students: 51,913

Number of states represented: 50

Percentage of out-of-state students: 10%

Percentage of international students: 9.6%

#### Gender

Women: 56.3%

Men: 43.6%

#### Ethnicity/Race

American Indian or Alaskan Native: 0.1%

Asian: 22.0%

Black: 4.5%

Hispanic: 25.2%

International: 9.6%

Multiracial (excl. Black or Hispanic): 2.8%

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander: 0.1%

White: 33.0%

Unknown or Blank: 1.8%

### **University Metrics**

Teaching faculty (Fall 2022): 3,254

Undergraduate degree programs: 156

Courses: 12,400+

Student organizations: 1,000+

### **Political Landscape**

Frequent and often significant changes to election laws in combination with a heightened focus from state political leadership on election crimes and administration have created an especially challenging environment to work with university partners and publicly support student voting while maintaining a nonpartisan perception.

TX Votes tackles this challenge by working closely with a decentralized set of partners with direct access to students which can take access without necessitating public statements or actions

from university leadership. These partners are trusted to work with students and have missions that involve developing their civic and political knowledge and experience.

We also work to ensure that students trust our information and assistance by engaging in no advocacy activities and exclusively sourcing information we provide from government election resources. In addition, we maintain connections with organizations like CVP with legal resources to advise us when necessary on the information we provide and activities in order to ensure they are free from legal concerns. We also keep our information on platforms that are easy to update and short term in order to make clear to students where and what the most up to date information is in the case of changing laws.

Finally, we seek to influence our efforts from political pressure by relying on students and making it clear that these efforts are driven first and foremost by student leadership. This creates a flexible and more resilient base for our activities in the face of changing staff and changing laws around the activities of public university staff that may have a chilling effect on enthusiasm to self-start these activities. Our partners are important, but we understand in the current political climate our activities and goals are not always easy for staff and faculty to publicly support and engage in. We seek to ease their concerns through our thorough and longstanding commitment to nonpartisanship and our focus on the mechanics of voting in the information we provide.

## **Relevant Legal Measures**

### **Voter Registration**

- Texas allows mail in voter registration, voter registration at the DMV, and voter registration on paper with a Volunteer Deputy Registrar (VDR) appointed by a County Voter Registrar
- Texas does not have automatic voter registration or online voter registration
- Texas counties can update address information online when the change is within county boundaries but this requires a Texas Drivers License and a Voter's registration audit number which is on their certificate or available when they check their information on the Secretary of State website
- VDRs must be retrained after every even numbered year, online training is available
- VDRs must be 18 years old
- Only VDRs can be in possession of non-mail in voter registration forms and these forms must be delivered to the county within 5 days of being filled out

### **Voting**

- Texas only allows voting by mail using certain excuses, one of which is being outside of the county of residence during the early voting and election day voting period
- No form of Student ID is valid as Voter ID in Texas



- A reasonable impediment to procuring ID can be testified to and with additional paperwork a voter may vote without an ID in this circumstance
- During early voting, a voter may vote with a limited ballot on statewide measures, but this is not available during election day
- People cannot be offered things of any value in exchange for voting
- There cannot be more than one polling site per precinct

### **Overview of Current Efforts**

There are many partnerships that make efforts at UT Austin successful. Before spelling out our current activities in more detail we will discuss how we collaborate with our most important partners.

TX Votes works with each of its partners differently, but considers fellow student organizations among the most accessible partners with direct access to different aspects of the student community at UT Austin. Our efforts to work with student organizations includes the launch of the Civic Champions program, which incentivizes student organizations to complete activities in four categories of civic engagement: voting, volunteering, advocacy, and community. The results of this program are unknown as outreach to potential participants is ongoing.

One group of student organizations that TX Votes works with on a regular and ongoing basis is fellow civic engagement student organizations. This collaboration happens in the form of information sharing in a group chat and semi-regular zoom calls with representation from TX Votes, TX Rising, MOVE Texas, Hook the Vote, and Student PIRGs at most calls.

Every year, University Housing and Dining allows members of CEA organizations to register voters at centralized check-in, which is the first stop for students who are living on campus during Mooov-In. Nearly two-thirds of first-time freshmen and about 20% of the total undergraduate population live on campus, making centralized check-in a key opportunity to register students to vote at their new address. In addition to Mooov-In, UHD hosts voter registration pop-up events at dining halls and residence halls throughout the semester. In fall of 2023, members of TX Votes registered [insert number] during these pop-ups. Additionally, TX Votes hosted volunteer deputy registrar training with Resident Assistants, further integrating civic engagement in the department's curriculum.

Over the past two years, TX Votes has partnered with UT libraries to register voters and provide voter education resources to students at the two most popular on-campus libraries. Further, the library provides a voter guide on their website complete with nonpartisan information about how to register to vote and what to expect at the polls. The libraries also share resources on social media and provide mail-in voter registration forms at the checkout desk.

Each year, Student Affairs receives scholarship funding contingent on hosting an event on Constitution Day. In recent years, Constitution Day programming has incorporated voter registration opportunities. Further, the event during the fall of 2023 was hosted on National Voter Registration Day, so Student Affairs employees shared information about voting on campus that was provided by TX Votes.

Each semester, the Chief VDR of TX Votes sends an email to faculty allowing them to schedule an in-class presentation. In this presentation, a volunteer from TX Votes provides information about what's on the ballot, how to vote, and what to expect at the polls for about five minutes. Then, the volunteer offers students the opportunity to register to vote. Because we cannot reach all students through on-campus tabling and events, classroom presentations are one way that we ensure equity in our approach, reaching students of all backgrounds and majors in the one place where we know they will be: the classroom.

TX Votes is pursuing a relationship with The Office of the First-Year and Transfer Student Experience, which provides programming to students who are enrolling at UT Austin for the first time. This office oversees First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs), Transfer-Student Interest Groups (TRIGs), and signature courses, which all students must take. The director of the office expressed a willingness to disseminate election information to course professors and facilitators. She also allowed TX Votes to share a graphic on the digital monitor outside of the office, which is located in Jester Center, a building that students visit frequently.

TX Votes divides its work into three areas of focus:

1. Voter Registration
2. Voter Education
3. Voter Turnout

#### Voter Registration

Each fall, TX Votes registers students to vote during key university events, focusing on events directed towards first-year students. These events include:

1. Gone To Texas
  - a. Colleges within the university host events before the first day of class to welcome incoming students and TX Votes tables at these events to register students to vote.
  - b. TX Votes usually tables at 4-5 Gone to Texas events every fall semester upon approval from the hosting college or school.
2. Party on the Plaza
  - a. This event is the largest student organization fair at the beginning of the fall semester. TX Votes always tables at these events

3. Mooov-in
  - a. For freshmen living on campus, Mooov-in is the period for moving into residence halls on campus. TX Votes tables and offers voter registration to all freshmen at centralized check in as they receive their keys and official on-campus addresses.

TX Votes hosts several civic holidays, usually alongside coalition partners that also table and register voters throughout the day.

1. National Voter Registration Day
  - a. TX Votes hosts a major event on this civic holiday registering students to vote through an engaging public event with giveaways and opportunities to make a plan to vote.
2. Voter Education Week
  - a. TX Votes hosted a week of tabling around campus in collaboration with UHD and UT Libraries during fall of 2023. During these tabling sessions, TX Votes offers voter registration to all students as they pass through the libraries and dining halls.
  - b. This is combined with social media content about the upcoming voter registration deadline.
3. Voter Registration Deadline
  - a. Every semester, on the final day to register to vote before an election, TX Votes tables all day and goes until midnight. This happens at different locations around campus in coordination with other civic engagement organizations.

TX Votes does significant outreach in order to present in front of students during student organization meetings and classes every semester.

1. Faculty
  - a. TX Votes has coordinated with faculty for around a decade based on direct outreach and scheduling of presentations by TX Votes members in classrooms.
  - b. This is the core of TX Votes' efforts to reach students on campus and TX Votes is the only organization with the consistent access and capacity to reach students inside the classroom.
2. Student Organizations
  - a. Recognizing the valuable forum of student organization meetings, since spring of 2023 TX Votes has modeled its student organization outreach off of its faculty outreach. This offers student organizations a simpler process to collaborate and reduces the administrative burden for TX Votes.

Voter Education

TX Votes hosts events every year that focus on voter education by either providing students with information to help them navigate the process of voting or with information about issues and topics relevant to the upcoming election.

1. Events

a. Voter Education Week

- i. This week of tabling is still during the voter registration period so we combine these efforts and focus on providing voter guides with information about the voting process while we register voters.

b. Vote Early Day

- i. This event is an opportunity to focus on combining the process of voting information with a speaker that can share information specific to the upcoming election.

c. Early Voting

- i. During early voting, tailored voter information is provided at tabling to promote voting and help ease the process. Usually, 2- 4 days of tabling during this period.

2. Resources

a. Canvas Module

- i. Every semester TX Votes updates a canvas module and provides it alongside its outreach efforts to faculty. This module covers updated information about the process of voting and the American political system broadly.

b. Printed Voter Guides

- i. TX Votes creates voter guides that provide UT Austin students with the most important and relevant information about the upcoming election, serving as a one page reference for the entire upcoming election from registration verification to voter research. These are distributed during tabling and available at select libraries and residence halls.

c. Social Media

- i. TX Votes maintains an active social media presence on Instagram with critical information that aligns with the events and deadlines throughout each semester. This information is designed to be referenced and shared by students to make the process easy to understand and access.

d. Newsletter

- i. TX Votes publishes a newsletter called Civic Notes that combines important updates about election deadlines with short student-written pieces about how politics is interacting with life on campus and how students can get involved.

## Voter Turnout

Voter turnout efforts are the least systematic and coordinated part of the UT Austin coalition's programming. Voter turnout has been satisfactory during major elections, but disappointing and difficult to accurately assess during smaller elections.

1. Events
  - a. Vote Early Day
    - i. This event is an opportunity to focus on combining the process of voting information with a speaker that can share information specific to the upcoming election.
  - b. Early Voting
    - i. During early voting, tailored voter information is provided at tabling to promote voting and help ease the process. Usually, 2- 4 days of tabling during this period.
2. Tabling
  - a. CEA civic organizations table during the voting period and several conduct direct voter outreach through blockwalking and text banking prior to major elections. TX Votes tables multiple times during early voting and on election day.
3. Polling Sites
  - a. Since 2018, UT Austin has had two on campus polling sites. Currently, these are at the Flawn Academic Center and the LBJ School of Public Affairs.
4. Communications
  - a. Communication during the early voting period and on election day is limited to social media posts by civic student organizations and messaging university departments and centers is inconsistent.

## Goals

### Long Term Outcomes

*These are outcomes that would represent a successful year at UT Austin in regards to student engagement in voting and demonstration of civic knowledge and interest in voting. These outcomes would ideally be met as soon as possible, but we expect to reach them more than two years from now, but less than 8 years from now. Afterwhich, these should be maintained and consistently met in the future.*

#### Voter Registration

- Over 90% of eligible UT Austin students are registered to vote in a given year
- Over 95% of eligible UT Austin first year students are presented with the opportunity to register to vote through interaction with university departments and student organizations in a given year
- Over 75% of eligible UT Austin students get information about maintaining voter registration and voting from a CEA member every two years

#### Voter Education

- Over 80% of UT Austin students are aware of an on campus organization as a resource for voting information in a given year
- Over 95% of eligible UT Austin first year students in a two year period are presented with specific resources about the voting process
- Over 75% of eligible UT Austin students get assistance in maintaining voter registration and voting from a CEA member every two years
- Over 80% of UT Austin students know how to register to vote in Texas and know of at least one resource to find out more information about elections when they graduate
- Over 95% of UT Austin students know whenever voting is happening on campus

#### Voter Turnout

- Over 90% of eligible UT Austin students vote in every midterm or presidential election
- Over 50% of eligible UT Austin students vote in every election

### Long Term Programming Goals

*We expect to accomplish these goals by instituting this programming within the next four to six years.*

#### Student Organizations

- TX Votes and CEA members annually have partnerships with 80 student organizations with a membership of over 50

- TX Votes and CEA members annually give 60 presentations at student organization meetings with 50+ in attendance
- Annually at least 40 organizations are distinguished civic champions
- Annually at least 20 organizations are exemplary civic champions

### **University Housing and Dining**

- TX Votes has a partnership with UHD to provide voting information and voter registration to all first year students that live in residence halls annually
- Voter registration tabling at centralized Mooov-In every fall
- 6 tabling events at UHD buildings on campus every semester
- Email with election reminders from UHD coordinated with other student service centers on campus for every election
- Reach 80% of students moving in
- TX Votes partnership explicit and documented in annual UHD plans for Mooov-in
- Continue creating and providing a voting information packet for RA boards

### **First Year Academic Opportunities**

- TX Votes has a partnership with Faculty and the School of Undergraduate Studies which allow them to reach all first year students in the classroom every year
- Civic/voting information managed in collaboration with TX Votes included in First-Year experience curriculum
- Eligible UT Austin first year students are presented with the opportunity to register to vote through collaborations with the Office of the First Year Experience, honors programs, faculty, and the FRI program

### **Upperclassman Opportunities**

- Present annually to classes that are estimated to reach 80% of students in their last two years at UT Austin
- TX Votes and CEA members have partnerships with off campus residences to provide voting information and voter registration opportunities
  - 20 off campus residences of varying sizes partners with an organization to offer voting information and registration every year

### **Civic Student Organizations**

- TX Votes has partnerships with university communications of various departments which systematically inform students when voting happens on campus
- Coordination of events and communication for civic holidays and election deadlines are such that 90% of students in a given year know when key deadlines and holidays are:
  - Voter Registration tabling prior to deadline

- Last Day to Register to Vote
- National Voter Registration Day
- Voter Education Week
- Vote Early Day
- Early Voting Start
- Early Voting End
- Election Day
- In a given year, TX Votes and CEA members have more than 60 VDRs that are well trained in the paperwork process and the laws surrounding voter registration

### **Short Term Goals**

**Short term goals are expected to be met by November 2024. If a goal activity is expected to be completed annually, the complete number or full level of partnership should be met as described by November 2024. However, these can and should be completed as soon as possible.**

### **Student Organizations**

Every year:

- 50 presentations at student organization meetings with 25+ in attendance
- 20 organizations distinguished civic champions
- 5 organizations exemplary civic champions

### **University Housing and Dining**

Every year:

- Voter registration tabling at centralized Mooov-In
- Voter registration tabling during early Mooov-In period

Every semester:

- 6 tabling events at UHD buildings on campus

Every election:

- Email with election reminders from UHD coordinated with other student service centers on campus
- Creating and provide a voting information packet for RA boards

### **First Year Academic Opportunities**

Office of the First Year Experience

FIGs & UGS Signature Courses

- Every semester the office supports outreach to staff/faculty who instruct FIG courses & UGS signature courses

Honors Programs



- Every year TX Votes presents a voter registration opportunities to all honors program students

#### Introductory Lab Lectures

- Multiple faculty teaching introductory lab lectures invite TX Votes to present in their classes every semester
  - Especially intro lab lectures in the FRI program

### **Upperclassman Opportunities**

#### Faculty

##### Every semester:

- Systematic outreach to professors that instruct courses estimated to reach 75% of students in their last two years at UT Austin
- 60 professors invite TX Votes to present in their classes

#### Off-Campus Residences

##### Every year:

- 5 off-campus residences partner with TX Votes or an community organization to offer voter information and registration

### **Civic Student Organizations**

#### Civic Holiday Celebrations

- TX Votes coordinates with other civic organizations, University Unions, UT Libraries, and University Housing and Dining to celebrate civic holidays and recognize election deadlines whenever they occur:
  - Voter Registration tabling prior to deadline
  - Last Day to Register to Vote
  - National Voter Registration Day
  - Voter Education Week
  - Vote Early Day
  - Early Voting Start
  - Early Voting End
  - Election Day

#### Volunteer Capacity

- Every semester, civic organizations at UT Austin train and mobilize more than 50 competent and mistake free volunteer deputy registrars that can register voters and provide information to students

## Strategy

### Immediate Strategies

#### Students Organizations

Why: UT Austin has a robust student organization culture, estimated at over 1000 organizations, and reaching students with voter registration and election information when they are with their closest peers will help connect the existing life of students on campus with opportunities for political engagement.

Responsibility: TX Votes CEA Chair and CEA civic organization partners

Frequency: Semester

Preparation Required:

1. Keep an up to date list of all student organizations
2. Send multiple emails to all organizations prior to each semester
3. DM every organization available on social media
4. Request direct outreach from TX Votes and civic organization members

Target Audience:

1. Students in STEM focus and affinity group organizations with lower voting rates.
2. Students who are more tuned into student organizations, especially those with mandatory attendance, than academics.

Tactics:

- Organization Recognition

Civic Champions is a program to recognize student organizations that participate in activities that support key areas of civic engagement, including voting. This comes with public recognition and financial awards to two student organizations to encourage future steps to integrate civic engagement into their programming. More information is available [online](#).

- Presentations at organization meetings

Following outreach to all student organizations at UT Austin, trained TX Votes members give short presentations at student organization meetings where they are invited and offer the opportunity to register to vote with a VDR appointed to register voters in Travis County.

- Events in collaboration with student organizations

Speaker events hosted in collaboration with student organizations that speak about issues relevant to student voters in the upcoming election. TX Votes regular biweekly meeting times are an available venue for these collaborations.

#### In the Classroom (first-year students)

Why: Classrooms are the only venue where all students at UT Austin can be found. There are certain classes that must be taken during their first year at UT Austin and some that are not

required but taken by a large swath of students. Reaching all first-year students is a priority goal of efforts at UT Austin to introduce them to resources on campus and the process of voting as UT students.

Responsibility:

- TX Votes
  - Volunteers give presentations
  - Outreach to faculty and staff
- Office of the First-Year Experience
  - Assist with outreach
  - Curriculum changes

Frequency: Semester

Preparation Required:

1. Develop updated presentation
2. Maintain updated list of professors instructing classes required in the final year of degrees at UT Austin
3. Email all professors prior to the semester

Target Audience: students in their first year at UT Austin

Tactics:

- Partnership with Office of the First Year Experience and faculty
  - Meet with office staff to explore opportunities for ongoing collaboration and support from the office.
- Presentations in classes
  - Following outreach to faculty and staff and an invitation in the form of a scheduled presentation date, trained TX Votes members give short presentations during classes and offer the opportunity to register to vote as a VDR appointed to register voters in Travis County

### **First-Year Students on Campus**

Why: Reaching all first-year students is a priority goal of efforts at UT Austin to introduce them to resources on campus and the process of voting as UT students. Students are exposed to many campus resources and opportunities via the residence halls and integrating voting into this space makes civic life part of their vision of life ahead at UT Austin.

Responsibility: CEA Civic Organizations

Frequency: Year

Preparation Required:

1. Coordinate with UHD staff
2. Schedule volunteers during a difficult time of year prior to classes start

Target Audience: first-year students

**Tactics:**

- Partnership with UHD  
Maintain updated contacts and regularly meet with UHD staff to explore opportunities for ongoing collaboration and support from the office.
- Tabling at Mooov-In  
Volunteers from civic organizations table from open to close both days the centralized check in for first year students to move into residence halls.
- Tabling at semester kick off events  
Volunteers from civic organizations table during Gone to Texas events and other university wide events like student organization fairs.

**Students Living Off Campus**

Why: Students who move off campus should update their voter registration address before they vote again. It is important to reach them after their address changes and to ensure they remain aware of upcoming elections and deadlines.

Responsibility: CEA Civic Organizations

Frequency: Semester

Preparation Required:

1. Maintain accurate contact information for apartment complexes and leasing agents in student neighborhoods.
2. Collaborate with community organizations to increase volunteer capacity and breakthrough to residence contacts that can make decisions.

Target Audience: primarily upperclassmen in nearby Austin neighborhoods (ideally also Riverside)

**Tactics:**

- Partnerships with off campus residences  
Prepare information packets with key information and main in voter registration forms or plan pop up tabling at off campus residences during or after move-in periods, especially in the fall semester.
- Tabling at off campus locations  
During civic holidays and deadline days table at community locations off campus in the evening when campus is a less busy space for students.

**In the Classroom (upperclassmen)**

Why: Classrooms are the only venue where all students at UT Austin can be found. There are certain classes that must be taken during each degree path at UT Austin and some that can be avoided but are taken by a large swath of students, such as the VAPA core credit and GOV 312L. Reaching students before major elections is a priority goal of student voting efforts at UT Austin.

Responsibility: TX Votes

Frequency: Semester

Preparation Required:

1. Develop updated presentation
2. Maintain updated list of professors instructing UGS signature courses and FIG courses
3. Email all professors prior to the semester

Target Audience: upperclassmen students

Tactics:

- Partnerships with key faculty  
Regularly reach out to key faculty with specific request and explanation of their importance to our efforts
- Presentations in classes  
Following outreach to faculty and staff and an invitation in the form of a scheduled presentation date, trained TX Votes members give short presentations during classes and offer the opportunity to register to vote as a VDR appointed to register voters in Travis County

### **Visibility on Campus**

Why: In order to create a broader awareness about elections we must make the events visible to students when they are on campus and in a position to access resources and vote at our on campus polling locations. This provides motivation for students to vote and create a sense of excitement around these moments of civic participation.

Responsibility: University Sub-units, TX Votes, Hook The Vote

Frequency: Election

Tactics:

- Public events  
Civic Holidays, Speaker events, Deadline days
- Partnerships with UHD, UT Libraries, and Office of the Dean of Students  
Tabling at prominent on campus locations and support in providing informational materials to students
- Tabling on campus in coordination with civic student organizations  
Coordination in scheduling and location planning for tabling during civic holidays and ensuring a presence around campus
- Posters and brochures at student service centers, including libraries, on campus  
Updated for each election and provided by TX Votes to ensure nonpartisan and advocacy free content these materials add voting assistance to the student services provided by these centers on campus
- Stickers on student laptops and water bottles  
Provided for free to students these materials ensure students see small reminders of voting and the civic culture on campus everyday

### **Visibility Online**

Why: In order to create a broader awareness about elections we must make the events visible to students in their inboxes and on their social media feeds in order to break through and bring attention to elections. This provides accessible information for students about voting and creates a sense of excitement around these moments of civic participation.

Responsibility: University sub-units, CEA civic organizations

Frequency: Election

Preparation Required:

1. Provide updated summary of election information and messaging to University sub-units
2. Prepare graphics and captions
3. Post and promote in a coordinated manner

Tactics:

- Coordinated election content included in newsletters from university subunits  
Provide sample language for inclusion in newsletters in a timely manner with a suggested deadline for publication.
- Coordinated social media content from university accounts and student organizations  
Provide sample template graphics and captions for publication by partner accounts in a timely manner with a suggested deadline for publication.
- Text banks with election reminders  
Host events for volunteers to contact students who have provided contact information to TX Votes or a CEA partner organization.

### **Maintain Strong Volunteer Core**

Why: Tabling, presentations with student Organizations and in classrooms, and events all require significant volunteer commitment during the preparation and execution stages. In order to meet the demands of this programming we must have well trained and enthusiastic volunteers.

Responsibility: CEA Civic Organizations

Frequency: Semester

Target Audience: Members of Civic Engagement Student Organizations

Tactics:

- VDR training events at the beginning of each semester
- Promotion of online county VDR trainings
- Recruitment at freshman orientations
- Recruitment at student organization fairs
- Social events for student volunteers
- Free food for student volunteers at regular meetings

### **Long Term Strategic Outlook**

- Student centered decision making continues, even as partnerships become more prominent
- Incorporate campus plan goals into university planning for groups and departments other than TX Votes
- Clear annual procedures that are established and known by TX Votes student leaders in order to maintain contacts and outreach to organizations and professors
- Funding for programming grows and comes from more diverse sources
- Programming becomes more tailored to the student audiences it is presented to, from classes to specific student organizations

### **Reporting**

The campus plan will be reviewed by campus partners alongside an invitation to a more in depth dialogue with TX Votes leadership and ASI staff. A final version will be provided upon submission to each campus partner and external national partners.

All past and current campus plans will be available on the TX Votes page of the Annette Strauss Institute [website](#), alongside NSLVE reports.

### **Evaluation**

TX Votes currently lacks tools for collecting accurate and robust data about the impact of its programming and usually is able at best to provide a count of classrooms presented in, students registered to vote during a semester, and students who attended their meetings and events.

In addition to making the system of collecting the above data, TX Votes should record the name, email, and graduation year of students that attend all events or interact with the organization while tabling. In addition, it should know the number of students they reached in classrooms and the number of professors they work with each semester. They should also have metrics about the distribution of their physical media and the reach of their social media.

This should be complemented by research from a university partner to connect the students reached by TX Votes and its partners with the impact it has on student voting at UT Austin. It is important that this includes the actions of partners and that their impact be appropriately understood. The assessment should follow the long term goal outcomes outlined prior in this campus plan.

This independent assessment would complement NSLVE and should be used to understand when goals are met. On a semester basis, TX Votes data about events and internal metrics of programming should be compared with short term programming goals to track progress.

Finally, we will pursue access to VAN through a nonprofit partner in order to utilize the information available in the voter file and open up more targeted programming and better evaluation of our success or failure in reaching widespread voter participation among students.