

The University of Utah

# Student Engagement Plan 2020-2021



# Executive Summary

---

The following Student Engagement Plan for the 2020-2021 academic year was developed by the staff of the Hinckley Institute of Politics, student ambassadors for the Andrew Goodman Foundation, and the Government Relations Board of the Associated Students of the University of Utah (ASUU).

## Hinckley Institute Staff:

Jason Perry, Director

Morgan Lyon Cotti, Associate Director

Kyle Tucker, Program Coordinator

## Andrew Goodman Foundation Ambassadors:

Jonas Warner, Lead Ambassador

Lauren Harvey

Sierra McNeil

## ASUU Government Relations Board:

Sydney Kay, Director

Lauren Harvey, Associate Director

Abby Feenstra, Legislative Advisor

Collectively these three campus entities will work in consultation with University of Utah academic departments and various university organizations to increase voter registration and engagement across campus. The Hinckley Institute and ASUU Government Relations Board maintain budgets to implement voting related programming, including forums, watch parties, voter registration tools such as TurboVote. The purpose of this plan is to provide the framework for voting and election related activities for the 2020-2021 academic year and focuses on efforts for the 2020 General Election and the 2020 Vice Presidential Debate hosted by the University of Utah. This plan lists campus and community partners, specific events to be held throughout the coming year and provides an explanation of institutional commitments and efforts related to voting. This plan also provides specific goals and strategies for attaining those goals. Finally, the report provides plans for adapting to the changing circumstances related to Covid-19.

# Institutional Commitment

---

University of Utah President, Ruth Watkins has signed the Higher Education President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation. She was also a signatory to the PAC-12 Voting Challenge Letter sent to PAC-12 president's and chancellors this summer. The University of Utah has also shown its commitment to civic participation by hosting the 2020 Vice Presidential Debate. The University intends to host a number of forums and watch parties (virtually) for the

debate, as well as implement curriculum in various classes related to the VP Debate. Examples include talking about the history of presidential debates, the role of the vice president, and the importance of youth voting.

The university has also made a commitment to give all tickets for the debate to students and to enlist more than 150 student volunteers to help staff various positions surrounding the debate. Additionally, the University published a voting guide that was emailed to all students and published on the U's website that has information regarding the on-campus polling location, mail balloting, Covid-19 safety, voter registration deadlines, voter ID, and how to research candidates.

Finally, the U is once again hosting an on-campus polling location at our basketball arena (Huntsman Center). The Academic Senate also passed a resolution requiring flexibility for students on Election day. This includes not scheduling tests or due dates for all classes on Nov. 2 and Nov. 3. Allowing students to not attend class to engage in election related activities, and not having athletic competitions or practices. The U is also providing post-election resources through the Counseling Center.

## Landscape

---

### **1. NSLVE Data:**

We saw a significant increase in the voting rate for our campus for 2018, the voting rate was 44.7% in comparison to 21.3% in 2014. This is almost 5% higher than the national average. The voting rate of registered students was 69%. The voting rate was up in almost every measurable category including gender, race or ethnicity, education status, field of study, and age group. Women voted at a higher rate than men and Hispanic students increased the voting rate from 13.4% in 2014 to 39.7% in 2018.

The most common method of voting is mail-in ballots, which is in line with the state's transition to majority mail-in balloting. This will be an advantage for our campus as we prepare for the 2020 election amid the COVID-19 pandemic. As many states hurry to prepare mail-in ballots, Utah already has the existing infrastructure and bandwidth to conduct the majority of its elections by mail. This in turn will help boost turnout, while protecting the safety and health of our campus community.

In comparison to the most recent presidential election, the NSLVE report states that 56.7% of all students voted in 2016, a 1.2% increase from 2012. However, the voter registration rate dropped from 80.8% in 2012 to 72.8 % in 2016.

### **2. Vice Presidential Debate:**

The University of Utah was selected to host the Vice-Presidential Debate on October 7, 2020. This provides an incredible opportunity for voter registration programming and civic

engagement for our entire campus. It also helps to gain support for civic engagement programming from university administration since there is an easy tie to the debate.

### **3. Partnerships:**

The Hinckley Institute of Politics: The center for all things politics at the University of Utah. The Hinckley Institute of Politics at the University of Utah is dedicated to engaging students in governmental, civic, and political processes; promoting a better understanding and appreciation of politics; and training ethical and visionary students for careers in public service. As a nonpartisan organization, the Hinckley Institute strives to promote involvement across the political spectrum—specifically through voter registration and turnout efforts, political forums research, and a wide variety of political experience through classes, internships, and volunteer opportunities. The Andrew Goodman team operates out of the Hinckley office. The Campus Champion is a full-time staff member at the Institute appointed by the director to oversee voting initiatives

ASUU: The Associated Students of the University of Utah (ASUU) is the student government organization on campus. It is divided into three co-equal branches similar to federal and state governments. ASUU also coordinates with over 600 student groups and clubs to offer more ways for students to connect with other students that share their interests. The ASUU Government Relations board is a cabinet-level committee within the executive branch and engages in various aspects of local, state & national politics; is committed to informing, involving, & connecting students with any civic opportunities available to them.

Salt Lake County Clerk - Elections Division: The Salt Lake County Clerk oversees all elections for the Salt Lake County area. We have worked with them in the past to establish an on-campus polling location at the main campus library.

Marriott Library: We work with library administration to host on-campus polling location in the main auditorium of the library.

Jon M. Huntsman Center: In response to the Covid-19 pandemic the UofU administration wanted to have a larger venue for our on-campus polling location. In stead of the Marriott Library we will be using the basketball arena (Huntsman Center).

University of Utah Marketing and Communications (UMC): We will work with UMC to develop voter information to be disseminated on campus.

State of Utah Lieutenant Governor's Office: The Lt. Governor's Office oversees elections for the state of Utah and hosts a competition between all state colleges related to voting. Points are earned for various election related activities hosted on campus such as voter registration events, scavenger hunts, service projects etc. The campus with the most points wins the Campus Cup.

In addition to maintaining the state's comprehensive voter registration [website](#) the Lt. Governor's office also provides a resource toolkit that includes social media graphics for the Campus Cup.

Other partnerships:

- Labs for Liberty
- Voto Latino
- Voterize
- TurboVote

Potential/New Partnerships

Office of Admissions: Registering to vote is also a requirement to gain in-state residency for tuition purposes, so we feel this partnership will be mutually beneficial. This would be a joint effort with Admissions and Housing.

Office of Orientation and Transition: OOT conducts new student and transfer student orientations throughout the summer and before the start of the spring semester. We hope to work with them to institutionalize voter registration across campus for all new students.

David Eccles School of Business: During the spring semester of 2020 we began coordinating with the Business School to host voter registration events in the business buildings on campus. We had also talked about cross-promoting events and supporting civic engagement efforts for the student group "Women In Business." Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 our spring events with the Business School were canceled, we are working on re-planning them now.

Department of Athletics: During the spring semester of 2020 the Athletics Department reached out to us wanting to coordinate voter registration/education efforts for student-athletes. Because many student-athletes come from out-of-state they are often unfamiliar with voter registration requirements, or the process of requesting an absentee ballot.

#### **4. Resources:**

Financial

- AGF Annual budget
- Hinckley budget
- ASUU Student Group funding
- ASUU Government Relations Board - The partnership with AGF and the Government Relations Board also provides an additional source of funding. An MOU must be signed by both parties.

Material

- Hinckley office space
- Hinckley Forum Room - multipurpose room with a seating capacity of 150
- University Union Building offices and space if rented beforehand

- AGF tabling materials
- Social media platforms (Hinckley Institute, ASUU and AGF all have Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages)
- ALL-IN Social Media Tool Kits
- NVRD Social Media Tool Kits
- Zoom account for virtual events (provided to all students and staff at the university)

#### Human Resources

- AGF ambassadors and volunteers
- Campus Champion - Kyle Tucker
- Brooke Doner – Hinckley Institute Marketing Director
- Jason Perry – Vice President, Government Relations; Director, Hinckley Institute

### **5. Institutionalization:**

We have worked with the Office of the Registrar to host a temporary link to TurboVote. This link generated a lot of traffic for the 2019 municipal elections and we hope to use it again leading up to the 2020 election.

The Andrew Goodman Foundation has a presence on the Student Engagement Subcommittee for the Vice-Presidential Debate. We are working with other campus partners on that subcommittee including Housing and Residential Education, the University Union, Hinckley Institute, Student Government, and University Communications and Marketing to plan student engagement events, volunteer opportunities, and other programming surrounding the VP debate in October.

As part of our planning, we are working with various colleges and departments to incorporate various civic engagement components into university courses across multiple disciplines with a tie-in to the debate.

### **6. Programming:**

- Welcome Week (virtual event)
- National Voter Registration Day (Social media campaign, outside tabling)
- Campaign Carnival (Month of October, virtual events)
- Vice Presidential Debate (Week of October 5th)
  - Watch Parties (virtual)
  - Voter Registration
  - Forums/Panels
- Voting and Election Panels hosted by the Hinckley Institute (all virtual, live stream via YouTube)
  - Throughout semester
- Election Night Prediction Game and Give Away (via social media)
- Election Debrief Forum/Panel (Day after election day)
- Spring Forum

### **7. Achievements, Challenges, and Opportunities:**

We have had continued success in hosting a polling location on campus. The polling location was expanded to include the presidential and state primary elections for 2020. The site has been one of the most used polling locations in Salt Lake County outside the county offices.

We have also achieved our goal of establishing new partnerships that we hope to capitalize on for our fall programming (see Potential/New Partnerships section). We plan to co-host tabling sessions and have new partners co-sponsor events leading up to the election. This will help us reach more of the students on campus.

The size of the campus continues to be a challenge. There are a lot of students spread across the campus and it is difficult to interface with all of them. Our link to TurboVote on CIS helped to reach a broader audience but in-person interaction is always preferred. The COVID-19 pandemic will also create a unique challenge for this upcoming year as we try to follow social distancing protocols and maintain campus safety. However, it is a general election and census year, so the upcoming election has major implications for the future. As such, we want to make sure we are doing all we can to be prepared to boost voter turnout.

## Goals

---

### 1. Long-term goals:

- Organize a PAC-12 Voting Challenge
- Have voter registration as a permanent part of the new student orientation process
- Build on-campus social media following and texting platform subscriptions

### 2. Short-term goals

- Increase voter turnout for the 2020 election by 13%
- Increase voter registration rate by 8%
- Register 500 voters by election day 2020
- Build texting platform subscriptions to 250 by end of October
- Host weekly tabling sessions from the start of the fall semester through the end of October
- Meet with the Orientation Office to discuss integrating voter registration into the new student orientation process.

## Strategies and Tactics

---



### **Long-term strategies:**

Organize a PAC-12 voting challenge

- Currently working with PAC-12 coalition and ALL-IN Democracy Challenge

Have voter registration as a permanent part of the new student orientation (NSO) process

- Meet with Orientation Office to discuss the feasibility of integrating voter registration component of NSO
  - Demonstrate to Orientation Office the uses of TurboVote
  - Discuss NSLVE Data
- Research best practices from other universities

Build on-campus social media following and texting platform subscriptions

### **Short-term goal strategies:**

Increase voter turnout by 13%

- Increase use of TurboVote and explain the election reminders tool
- Use social media to increase awareness on-campus polling location, mail-in balloting, and absentee balloting.

Increase voter registration rate by 8%

- Conduct weekly tabling at Union Building
- Table at major events such as Plazafest, move-in day, National Voter Registration Day etc.
- Host link to TurboVote on CIS starting fall semester leading up to the election
- Conduct targeted tabling at different colleges/departments
- Utilize new partnerships with UMFA, Business School, and Athletics to host events and use their resources (building space, social media following, etc.) to boost awareness of voter registration

Register 500 new voters by election day

- Host link to TurboVote on CIS
- Promote NVRD Tabling via social media and campus partners
- Weekly tabling
- Keep track using TurboVote data and counting paper ballots

Build texting platform subscriptions to 250 by end of October

- Display signs with texting subscription info at tabling sessions
- Place posters across campus
- Utilize social media and campus partners to boost outreach

Host weekly tabling sessions from the start of the fall semester through the end of October

- Set up a weekly time for tabling at University Union
- Schedule additional targeted tabling sessions with campus partners and other departments on campus



Meet with the Orientation Office to discuss integrating voter registration into the new student orientation process.

- Reach out to Sydney Magana at Office of Orientation to schedule meeting
- Best to conduct meeting late fall semester or early spring
- Plan and prepare presentation about TurboVote and NSLVE to discuss importance of voting

## Timeline

---

### Events

- Welcome Week (Virtual, last week of July)
- Plazafest (Virtual, Sept 10)
- NVRD (September 22)
- Business School (Virtual events, 3-5 throughout semester)
- Voter registration with Athletics (First week of semester)
- Campaign Carnival (month of October, series of virtual events)
- Voting and Election Panels hosted by the Hinckley Institute
  - Candidate Convo: Congressional District 2 – Sept 14
  - Shaping Public Opinion – Sept 16
  - The Presidency – Sept 22
  - Candidate Convo: Governor's Race – Sept 23
  - Security and Voting Rights – Sept 28
  - Judges on the Ballot – Sept 29
  - Candidate Convo: Congressional District 4 – Oct 14
  - Candidate Convo: Lt. Gov – Oct 19
  - Amendment C – Oct 26
- Events with UMFA (dates TBD, likely late October)
- VP Debate (October 7, and week leading up to)
  - Forums
  - Watch Parties
  - Volunteer work
- Election Day Quiz (via social media)
- Election Day Debrief Forum

### Meetings

- Meet with government relations board of ASUU to discuss fall events at beginning of fall semester
- Meeting with Orientation office late fall early spring
- Follow-up meetings with UMFA, Business School and Athletics
- Continue to participate in VP subcommittee meetings
- Continue to participate in PAC-12 planning calls

### Digital Communication

- Focus on building social media following and building texting platform
- Work with campus partners to promote content online
- Host TurboVote link on CIS
- Include voting information in Hinckley Institute newsletter and @theU (campus-wide newsletter)

## Monitoring and Evaluation

---

### Meetings

- Weekly team meetings (day and time TBD, based upon class schedules)
- Texting and emails

### Events Reports

- Jonas Warner will report and track events

### Voter Registration and NSLVE

- We will be watching for the NSLVE report for the 2020 election to monitor progress
- TurboVote will track number of sign-ups and we will keep a log a paper ballot registration

### Research

- Study and research best practices for implementing voter registration into New Student Orientation from other campuses.

### Reporting

- We will make our NSLVE report publicly available on the Hinckley Institute website and on the ALL-IN Pac-12 Voting Challenge Website.
- We will also make these announcements via social media and the campus-wide newsletter @theU.
- As a result, all students and staff will have public access to the report.

## Coronavirus Adaption and Planning

---

We are closely monitoring the on-going developments regarding the spread of the coronavirus. The State of Utah is working on a color-coded system to assess risk and define health and safety measures. The scale works from red to orange, to yellow, to green (red being high risk, and green being low risk) The state is currently in the yellow zone, with Salt Lake City in the orange zone

(this may be updated based on new data). Guidance and protocols for each of these zones can be found at [coronavirus.utah.gov](https://coronavirus.utah.gov).

The University of Utah moved to online classes in late March and has continued with online instruction through the summer semester. However, the U is currently planning on being back on campus for the fall. The Utah System of Higher Education has developed the [following plan](#) that is to be implemented across all of Utah's public education institutions. The University of Utah is developing a specific plan for our campus that we will review and implement when it becomes available. More information regarding current University of Utah specific guidelines can be found at [coronavirus.utah.edu](https://coronavirus.utah.edu)

As we continue to adapt to social distancing guidelines and safety measures we will always comply with state, local, and university policies and procedures. We will exercise an abundance of caution in planning and executing events. Student and campus community safety will be our number one priority.

We plan to take the following precautionary measures (this list is not exhaustive and may be added to based upon best practices and changes in university policy)

- Wear face masks at all times
- Host virtual events where possible instead of in-person
  - The university now has a policy for no in-person gatherings larger than 10 people.
- Increase outreach via social media
- Wash hands regularly and provides sanitation (hand sanitizer, wipes, and disinfectant spray) for tabling and events
- Any student who feels sick should stay home, whenever students sign up to work events or tabling sessions we will work to have an alternate in place

We have enjoyed great success in hosting an on-campus polling location which has provided easy ballot access to students, faculty, and staff from across the university. However, to limit large lines and large numbers of people in a confined space, we plan to heavily promote mail-in balloting. Despite misinformation being spread about mail balloting, we strongly believe this is the safest and most efficient way to cast ballots amid a global pandemic, especially with the prospect of a spike in cases coinciding with the flu season. We will work with campus partners to promote awareness of mail balloting and provide education about how to properly complete a mail-in ballot.

The university is currently hosting some in-person classes however extracurricular gatherings are not allowed. As a result, our events will continue to be virtual for the time being and we will continue to conduct meetings and outreach digitally through social media, texting, email and video conferencing.