

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

# 2020 VOTER EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

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# Overview

As part of its mission, the University of Virginia serves the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world by developing responsible citizen leaders and professionals. Several initiatives and centers at the University of Virginia focus on strengthening democracy.

The Center for Politics at UVa helps facilitate campus-wide voter education and engagement initiatives. The mission of the Center for Politics, founded by Dr. Larry J. Sabato in 1998, is to educate and inspire our citizenry about practical politics and civic engagement through programs that are unique, compelling, and open-minded. Everything we do must fulfill our goal of instilling citizens with an appreciation for the core values of American freedom, justice, equality, civility, and service. We think politics makes public policy more vibrant and makes bureaucracies more responsive. Since our inception we have established annual conferences, publications, programs, and curricula to advance democracy around the world and to equip people to better understand politics and government.

The Center is a part of the National Campaign for Political & Civic Engagement, a consortium of 20 universities and colleges with academic programs in politics. Its priorities, directed towards college students are to establish:

- A relationship with electoral politics
- A foundation in civic education
- A focus on career development

The Center addresses these priorities through activities and programs such as our student Voter Registration Coalition, our internship program, an annual career panel, and the Youth Leadership Initiative.

Our 2022-2023 Voter Engagement Plan builds on previous plans based upon ongoing programs and student input with additional short- and long-term goals to broaden and deepen efforts. It includes contingencies dependent on public health responses to the COVID-19 global pandemic that may limit in-person interactions. Our 2022-2023 Voter Engagement Plan emphasizes opportunities for students to acquire knowledge to make them informed participants and skills to make them more effective participants in democracy.

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## **Focus Area: Full Participation**

The primary goal of the plan is to continue to embed political learning and civic engagement throughout the campus experience, giving every individual an opportunity to contribute their knowledge, skills and expertise to meaningfully participate in democracy through elections and other forms of civic engagement.

In September 2022, we are hosting the Virginia Student Democracy Summit. We will use the opportunity to educate and engage students at UVA, while collaborating with peers from campuses across the Commonwealth.

## **Increase Registration and Turnout**

Turnout among University of Virginia students has been on the rise, according to data from our National Study on Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) report and from CIRCLE estimates of youth turnout. UVA student voter turnout increased from 14.9% in the 2014 midterm elections to 45.8% in the 2018 midterm elections (NSLVE). For the 2020 elections, 68% of UVA students who were eligible (e.g., at least 18 years old and U.S. citizens) voted, an increase of nearly six percentage points over 2016 UVA student voting rates.

In 2020:

- Students were more likely to vote early (30%) and not-in-person (50%) than they were in 2016.
- Undergraduate students were slightly more likely to vote than were graduate students (64% vs. 57%).
- 68% of eligible UVA students voted, compared to 66% of eligible students at all participating institutions and, more specifically, compared to 69% of eligible students at public research institutions.



## **Equity and Inclusion**

Representative democracy works best when all perspectives are represented in political and decision-making processes. Yet, not everyone can equally access, express their voice or participate in democracy. We emphasize inclusion and outreach to increase political participation from historically marginalized groups.

## **Meeting People Where They Are**

At the heart of our strategy is to connect what individuals care about with an understanding of how they can make a difference on that issue for the benefit of the broader public good. Among the things that can be done on any public problem is registering to vote and voting. In addition, we ask individuals what they can do beyond voting in elections. The Center for Politics also hopes to further integrate civic initiatives into campus organizations. At UVA, this includes the vast array of student organizations and off-campus community programs. In 2022, we hope to build upon valued partnerships with Student Council, Fraternity and Sorority Life and other groups in order to create voting actions and messaging that is most appealing and relatable for our students. We plan to hold strategy meetings with student organizations to brainstorm ways to incorporate civic action into the frameworks of their club activities.

## **Expand Community Partnerships**

We aim to build upon our relationship with local registrars and Electoral Boards. We will emphasize opportunities for students to serve as election officers and to assist local Directors of Elections with early voting and absentee ballots. We also plan to build further partnerships with community-based organizations and entities, especially the public schools and youth-serving organizations, to form creative new approaches to increasing voter engagement and knowledge.

## Expand Voter Education and Engagement

Virginia Votes was established at UVA in 2020 in order to:

- create a culture of civic participation at UVA.
- coordinate offices and student groups involved in voter registration and voting.
- increase UVA student voting relative to previous equivalent election (i.e. midterms, presidential, etc.).



### Primary Facilitators, 2022-2023

**Glenn Crossman**, Director of Programs, Center for Politics at UVA,  
gac4t@virginia.edu

Dr. **Carah Ong Whaley**, Director of Civic Engagement, Center for Politics  
at UVA, clo3s@virginia.edu

**Bianka Warwick**, Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow, Chair of  
Legislative Affairs, UVA Student Council

**Isabel Dlabach**, Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow, Center for  
Politics Intern

The **Center for Politics at UVA** will work with students, faculty and staff to facilitate political learning and civic engagement programming for campus and for the broader public. The Center produces resources year-round with expert analyses of politics, elections and voting. In 2022-23, it will also work with students on a nonpartisan voting guide and organizing voter education events across campus and in the community, including co-organizing and hosting the 2022 Virginia Student Democracy Summit. The Center will maintain a website with information on elections and voting, and will help facilitate a social media campaign to inspire participation in elections and beyond.

# PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMMING

- **Office of the President**

President Jim Ryan has specifically made a commitment to support the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. The Office of the President provides communications to support on civic engagement and learning for democracy as part of the University's mission and current strategic plan. In accordance with the Higher Education Act, we will send university-wide emails with information on registering and voting.

- **Student Council**

Student Council's Legislative Affairs Committee will hold office hours to answer elections questions, provide sample ballots, and provide resources to help individuals vote. In addition, the committee will hold an absentee voting workshop for students who are registered with their home addresses.

Legislative Affairs has conducted focus groups with UVA's hourly workers in order to identify barriers to voting for those employed by the University. Informational brochures and flyers will be created and distributed electronically and in break rooms specifically for hourly workers.

- **Division of Student Affairs**

Public service and civic participation are among seven core goals of the division.

Move-In Weekend: In partnership with Housing and Residence Life along with volunteers from the student body for move-in weekend.

Volunteers will be at four locations around first-year dorms:

Gooch/Dillard, Old Dorms courtyard, O'Hill, and Gibbons along with two locations on Central Grounds: UVA Bookstore and South Lawn.

**National Voter Registration Day** (September 20, 2022) and **National Voter Education Week** (October 3-7, 2022): In partnership with Housing and Residence Life, we will host Democracy Dinners in dorms to educate and register voters.

- **UVA Libraries**

Provide space, tables, bulletin boards, and circulation desks as a place to advertise voter education and civic engagement resources and events.

# PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMMING

## **Student Organization Partners:**

- College Republicans
- University Democrats
- Cavalier Daily (Student Newspaper)
- Fraternity & Sorority Life
- Black Student Association
- Latinx Student Association
- Asian Student Union

## **LOCAL PARTNERS**

City of Charlottesville Registrar and Board of Elections  
Albemarle County Registrar and Board of Elections

We will work with our local registrars and Boards of Elections to recruit and train officers of elections, volunteers to help with mailing absentee ballots and to provide information to students on how and where to vote, especially with changes in district and precinct lines in 2022.

## **STATE PARTNERS**

Virginia Civic  
Virginia 21  
State Council on Higher Education in Virginia

## **NATIONAL PARTNERS**

Campus Vote Project  
Scholars Strategy Network  
Institution for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE)  
American Political Science Association Civic Engagement Section  
All In Campus Democracy Challenge  
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators  
Up-to-Us

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# STRATEGIC PLANNING

## VOTER EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

### **TABLING**

Weekly presence at key on-campus locations will be conducted in order to reach as many students as possible. Utilizing the Lawn and Newcomb Hall, registration and vote-by-mail options will be provided using laptops and paper registration form options.

### **NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION**

The Center for Politics facilitates voter registration and education during Summer Orientation.

### **STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS**

The Center for Politics and Legislative Affairs will reach out to every student organization on campus to ask them to ask their members to register to vote or check their voter registration. Volunteers will offer to attend organizational meeting to register voters. We will also participate in Student Org. Night and invite organizations to join the voting coalition, encourage volunteers to sign up, and offer voter registration.

### **NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY**

Center for Politics and Legislative Affairs will partner with the Office of Residence Life on programming and have a physical presence in highly trafficked areas of campus.

### **OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES**

Office of Disability Services offers every student who uses their services the opportunity to register to vote.

### **CLASS VISITS AND SYLLABUS STATEMENTS**

Legislative Affairs will offer class visits by trained volunteers. Class visits incorporate discussion of why voting matters, educates about voting processes and laws, provides time to answer questions, and registers voters in each class. The Center for Politics will provide important information regarding registration and elections to be included on course syllabi. Instructional faculty may include the statement as they wish.



# STRATEGIC PLANNING

## VOTER EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

### VOTING WEB PAGES

The Center for Politics and Hoos Voting will continuously be updated with the latest voter information and tools for the public's use. These include links to events, the online voter registration portal, a calendar of important dates, and other information regarding voting laws, polling locations and Voter ID requirements.

### NONPARTISAN CANDIDATE VOTER GUIDE

In partnerships with an undergraduate Political Science course, students will produce a nonpartisan guide of the candidates that will be circulated on campus, in the community and posted online. It is a tool for our community to learn more about who is on the ballot and their positions on issues.

### STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

The Center for Politics plans to increase the agency and participation of students from across campus by providing training and opportunities to assist with registration, class visits, tabling, and outreach. The Student Council will be a key partner in this endeavor.

### TRAVELING TOWN HALL

In partnership with the Office of Residence Life, candidates or representatives of the candidates will be invited to participate in a traveling town hall to dormitories and off-campus housing sites, if feasible.

### ELECTORAL BOARD AND HARRISONBURG REGISTRAR PARTNERSHIP

The Center for Politics will continue its valued partnership with the local voter registrars and electoral boards to ensure the voter registration efforts align with the registrars needs. The local registrar and electoral board provide valuable guidance on registration processes and presentations to our students.

### PRESENTATIONS FOR STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Overcoming social and cultural barriers are important when trying to get students involved in civic engagement. We have workshops and presentations that help students debunk these cultural myths and stigmas that will help motivate them to vote.

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# GET OUT THE VOTE

## **ELECTION NIGHT WATCH PARTY**

The Center for Politics will host an Election Night Watch Party combining analysis and entertainment as election results roll in. If an in-person party is not possible, we will offer virtual programming.

## **VAN TO VOTE**

Because of UVA's high percentage of students living off-campus, Legislative Affairs will provide rides throughout Election Day to all polling locations that serve students. This assists in students being able to go to these from the on-campus location if they were mistaken about where to vote as well as providing a way to get to the polls without a vehicle of their own.

## **VOTE TOGETHER**

To promote the collective power of voting, GOTV messaging will encourage community building and taking action with friends and peers. Students will be encouraged to go to the polls or vote-by-mail with their friends and roommates.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS**

The team utilizes our social media platforms and network to share reminders of dates, polling locations, voting tools, and requirements.

## **POST-ELECTION**

The Center for Politics will host a panel in the days after the elections to provide analysis about the implications of results for governance. It will also host the American Democracy Conference in Washington, DC, which is open to students and the general public.

## **OFFICERS OF ELECTION**

We will work with our local Boards of Elections to encourage students to be poll workers.