

Tufts University Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates for the 2018 Mid-Term Election

Executive Summary

Background

Tufts University has a strong ethos of political participation and civic engagement, due in part from the presence of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life and its active and passionate student body. In 2016, Tisch College formed JumboVote, a university-wide initiative to boost political learning, engagement, and voting during the 2016 presidential election and beyond. Through campus collaboration and the hiring of a Voting Coordinator, the University and Tisch College recruited over 65 volunteers to register over 1,366 on all its campuses, and partnered with over a dozen student groups to engage diverse sectors of campus in its initiatives. As the 2018 midterm elections arrive, Tisch College has built upon the foundations of the 2016 JumboVote experience to engage the University in even deeper and more impactful ways.

Organization: Operating under the auspices of the Tisch College for Civic Life, JumboVote is managed by a group of undergraduates and the Student Outreach Coordinator at Tisch College. Leadership within this group is largely horizontal, with one student acting as the formal liaison between Tisch College's Student Outreach Coordinator and the rest of the group, the student outreach coordinator is present at all meetings and works directly with other members as well. Members within the core group are responsible for specific elements of JumboVote's strategic plan for fall 2018. These include liaisons to the Office of Residential Life (ResLife), Concert Board, and Tufts Athletics, literature and materials, social media, and graphic design. Members are encouraged to assist beyond their area of responsibility.

Coalition: JumboVote is made up of an eclectic coalition of members from the Tufts community who are united by their shared commitment to civic engagement. JumboVote is nonpartisan and strives to include voices from across the political spectrum, including those who have not participated in the political process in the past. Our partners will include traditional campus political groups, as well as members from the Group of 7 Houses, greek life, athletic teams, issue groups, and performing arts groups. While JumboVote is largely undergraduate, there are JumboVote representatives in various graduate schools, and undergraduate students will travel to various schools for pre-ordained registration drives.

Partners:

Andrew Goodman Foundation-Tufts Chapter (AGF): AGF has committed to hosting a series of issue-related events, with the goal of engaging the Tufts Community on issues that matter to them. These events will include panels, followed by small groups discussions with supporting

material gathered by AGF ambassadors. Possible topics include the role of unions today, higher education affordability, and gun control, among others.

Office of Campus Life (OCL): The OCL is responsible for new student orientation and plays a vital role in the student experience on campus, especially during the first few weeks. JumboVote plans to introduce new Jumbos to Tufts' rich civic engagement traditions through a series of voter registration events during orientation week. To maximize our visibility and chances to engage with students, we will table events that already include attractions independent of JumboVote. Such events may include, pending the release of the final schedule for the week by the OCL, the Tufts Dining Cookout, the student activities fair, among others.

Office of Residential Life (ResLife): ResLife will serve a critical role in JumboVote's mission, particularly with regards to freshman outreach. JumboVote, in conjunction with ResLife, will host follow-up Get Out the Vote (GOTV) and registration events in residential halls, both during and the week leading up to National Voter Registration Week (NVRD). Events during NVRD will focus on GOTV and helping students come up with voting plans for election day, while ResLife events leading up to NVRD will focus on registration and recruitment.

Leadership

The All in Democracy Challenge Action plan was written by Tisch College's 2017-2018 Student Outreach Coordinator and the acting student leader of JumboVote, a rising sophomore. The action plan was written after consultation with a group of 15 committed JumboVote volunteers, who met three times throughout the spring 2018 semester to discuss ideas, discern commitment, and set out a plan for the 2018 midterms. All volunteers were recruited through outreach throughout the university: volunteers gave presentations at university senate meetings, student athlete leader meetups, and multiple political group meetings, and hung flyers all around campus for a General Interest Meeting open to the entire university. More than 15 students have elected to join the JumboVote working group over the spring and summer of 2018, and are divided into different teams of events, social media, voting material coordination, and outreach. All members are involved in other extracurriculars at Tufts, and will recruit more members upon returning to campus in the Fall of 2018.

JumboVote Student Working Group:

Co-Chairs:

Marian Woznica, Student Outreach Coordinator (Until July 2018)

Peter de Guzman (Starting July 2018)

Matthew Tolbert, A21, Andrew Goodman Fellow

JumboVote members:

Nina Chukwura, A21

Laurel Bliss, A20

Luke Allocco, A21

Gwen Meccas, A21

Taite Pierson, A21
Henry Novak, A20
Liesl Jenkins, A21
Dani Musoff, A20
Carrie Haynes, A21
Nathan Rothwell, A21
Liza Harris, A21
James Boehme, A21
Meghan O'Brien, A21
Mathew Pena, A21
Annie Roome, A18

Student Groups Committed for Voter Registration:

Tufts Democrats
Tufts Republicans
Tufts Progressive Alliance
Tufts CIVIC
Tufts ALLIES
Left Unity Project

Administrative Support:

JumboVote receives administrative support from the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. While employing the Student Outreach Coordinator, JumboVote also receives support from various staff members throughout the College, including Jen McAndrew, Director of Communications, Strategy, and Planning, Sherri Sklarwitz, Associate Director for Tisch Programs, Alberto Medina, Communications Specialist, and Jess Byrnes, Special Programs Administrator. All devote resources to engage the student population during election years. JumboVote also receives administrative support through partnerships with the Office of the Provost, the Office of Residential Life, the Office for Campus Life, and the Tufts student government.

Coalition Meetings:

In the spring semester, JumboVote met every first and third Friday of the month starting after Spring Break. The co-chairs met each Thursday, beginning in January. In the fall semester, the entire team will meet once to twice a week. A large portion of planning and organizing will take place over the summer and thus will require members to communicate digitally. Members are aware of this and have committed to conducting business via email, Google Drive, and Skype. Full meetings are outlined beforehand by the co-chairs but remain casual and individual members are encouraged to speak freely on any element of JumboVote as they please. These meetings have consistently exceeded the goals of the prepared agenda and are typically followed up with an email summary from the co-chairs.

Mission:

Our mission is to engage the Tufts University community through coordinated, nonpartisan, voter registration events for the fall 2018 elections and to instill a lifelong commitment to voting and civic engagement.

Landscape

Civic learning and democratic engagement are enshrined in Tufts' mission, which states that we are "committed to providing transformative experiences for students and faculty...where creative scholars generate bold ideas, innovate in the face of complex challenges and distinguish themselves as active citizens in the world." Students participate in clubs and classes all over the campus that encourage them towards civic engagement, from the progressive Experimental College, to many of Tufts' active social justice clubs, to the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. Tisch College provides the most comprehensive resources towards civic engagement, including classes, programs, and events open to the entire university.

The confluence of courses, clubs, positive role models, and resources has a net positive impact on the civic engagement of students at the University: Tufts' 2016 NSLVE summary reported that 63.2% of its community members voted at the polls, which is 12 percentage points above the 2012 rate, and almost 13 points above the average rate. While Tufts is proud of its silver medal status in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge, JumboVote sees the opportunity for improvement. A university that prides itself on its forward-looking student body-- a student body dedicated to working for a better world--ought to strive for gold medal status.

One major internal barrier towards successful voting efforts is the limited time frame between the start of classes and the voter registration deadlines for many states from which students come. Classes begin the week after Labor Day and it has proven difficult to organize large cohorts of volunteers before student groups are codified. Because the Tufts campus straddles two different cities, Somerville and Medford, directing students to the correct polling location and filling out the correct address on registration forms has also proved challenging. In response to these barriers, Tufts pays for TurboVote and has created its own interface to facilitate students registering to vote electronically. Tufts also benefits from the abundant human capital on campus: faculty and staff are enthusiastic about encouraging students to vote, and are willing to partner with JumboVote to increase engagement.

Goals

Short-Term 2018 Goals: Our goal is to increase the 2014 midterm voting rate by 10 points, from 18.5% to 28.5%.

Long-Term Goals: Our goal is to increase student voting rates to 80% by 2020 and sustain rates at that level by instilling a culture of voting and civic participation.

Commitment

JumboVote's commitment is consistent with that of Tisch College: To engage the university community with the goal of fostering a lifelong commitment to civic engagement by bringing together the many voices that make Tufts a unique and dynamic place. We are not committed to instilling an interest in politics as JumboVote is not a political organization, rather, we are committed to connecting members of the Tufts community with one another through a like-minded sense of civic responsibility, as well as the communities of Greater Boston, individual states, and the nation as a whole.

Strategy

Voter Registration:

- TurboVote
 - Add the TurboVote link to as many possible platforms as possible: Tufts class registration page, professor/student communication portal, and website. Have the TurboVote link show up as an alert on the registration page.
- Voter Registration at Pre-Orientation and Orientation
 - Have Tufts communications send out blurb about JumboVote/TurboVote in email to incoming first year and transfer students during the summer
 - Have student volunteers attend open Orientation and Pre-Orientation events with JumboVote t-shirts and ipads to conduct informal voter registrations and spread the word to recruit volunteers for JumboVote's 2018 efforts
 - Co-sponsor Orientation activity and hand out JumboVote give-aways while registering students to vote
 - Ask the President to encourage voting in his matriculation speech
- Welcome Weekend with Tufts University Social Collective (TUSC)
 - Add an activity and voter registration table to TUSC's programming to attract students to register to vote
- Student Activities Fair
 - Register for table at Student Activities Fair to register students to vote
- Residential Hall Programming
 - Organize social and voting education events in first-year residential neighborhoods the week before National Voter Registration Week to promote the week and recruit volunteers
- National Voter Registration Week
 - Extend National Voter Registration Day to National Voter Registration Week. Bring in food trucks/ food carts and host voter registration drives in public places all over campus. Host Get out the Vote activities in residential halls.
 - Ask Office of the President to send an email promoting National Voter Registration Week and have Group of 7 houses, academic departments, Greek Life, and sports programs advertise the programming.

- Partner with Weekly Film series to screen movie and host registration drive on Friday night
- Host JumboVote Social Hour with Fletcher graduate community
- Host concert with free food on academic quad to register remaining students to vote
- Engage in large social media pushes towards registering to vote; release videos, profile picture campaigns, University snapchat and instagram takeovers

Voter Education

- Distinguished Speaker Series
 - Invite one or more political speakers to Tufts through Tisch College's popular Distinguished Speaker Series and co-sponsor with JumboVote. Host voter registration table outside the venue.
- Civic Dialogues
 - Host civic dialogues on issues related to the 2018 election so students can learn both sides of the debate before voting.
- Voter Education Materials
 - Distribute brochures and half-page documents on how to register to vote absentee, where to find polling locations, what is on the ballot for the 5 states from which the most students draw, information on swing states, how to be civically-engaged at Tufts.
- Voter Registration Hotline
 - Open a hotline where students can ask questions about registering to vote at any time
- JumboVote Facebook and Web page
 - List relevant resources and toolkits on JumboVote's Facebook and Web pages for students interested in registering to vote. Recreate Tufts-specific voter landing page for all questions regarding voting.
- Flyers
 - Post flyers around campus encouraging students to seek help registering to vote, look up non-partisan information regarding candidate and ballot issues, and promotions for early voting, if possible
- Voter Registration Office Hours
 - Host registration office hours at busy hubs on campus, including the library and the campus center, to assist passing students with any and all questions relating to voting. Representatives are not expected to know everything and are expected to follow up with inquiries with supporting materials created by JumboVote, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, and Tisch College.

Voter Participation/Get Out the Vote

- Week before Election Day:
 - Post poll information on available platforms throughout university
- Election Day:

- Have University President or Provost send email on election day encouraging students to vote and detailing the ways in which they can receive rides to vote
- Drive students to the polls using university vans
- Host a watch party to reveal the election results on campus
- Recruit cadre of students to engage in poll monitoring

Tentative Calendar of Events:

August 29- Have University President announce importance of voting during matriculation speech

August 29-September 3- Begin voter registration drives during Orientation Week. Host a table outside on the campus center every day and co-sponsor specific events to publicize importance of voting

September 17-21 - Host registration events in first-year residential “neighborhoods”

September 25-29- Host National Voter Registration Week

October 17- Massachusetts Voter Registration Deadline

October 22-November 2- Early Voting in Massachusetts

November 6- Election Day

Reporting

This plan will be shared with all members of the JumboVote team, the Tisch College of Civic Engagement, and all administrators around the university who choose to partner with JumboVote. We already share the NSLVE data online and will publicize the 2018 data as well. We will share information to the Tufts Community when relevant and helpful.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on readily available NSLVE data from previous election cycles, as well as other data available through Tisch College. Student engagement with individual events will be gauged post-election through a survey distributed by Tisch College’s weekly newsletter. Sign-up for this e-list will be available at each JumboVote event. Additionally, the JumboVote team will meet one to two times after election day to review turnout numbers and assess the success of individual events. Faculty and staff from Tisch College and across the University will be invited to attend one of these two meetings to review what will hopefully be a successful semester of civic participation and look ahead to future election and civic participation opportunities. When the NSLVE reports are released, Tufts will publish their rates as well.