

# 2018 University of Texas at Austin Voter Engagement Campus Plan

*Facilitated by TX Votes at the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life  
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# About the University of Texas at Austin

The University of Texas at Austin is a four-year public school located in Austin (Travis County), TX. In 2016, there were 52,402 students with 40,103 of those students being eligible voters. Of those students, 84% (33,677) were registered to vote and 56.5% (22,640) turned out to vote for the 2016 Presidential election. This was a 14.8% increase from 2012. In 2014, only 18 percent of UT Austin students turned out to vote for the midterm election. It is important to note that voter turnout rates in Travis County were the highest they had been in nearly 50 years because of a change in how city council members were elected. (We do not data on 2010 UT Austin voter turnout rates.)

As of 2016, UT Austin students represented 50 states with 10.6% of students from outside of Texas. Of those students 51.5% identify as female and 48.5% identify as male. Of the American citizens, 43.3% identify as white, 20% identify as Hispanic, 17.8% identify as Asian, and 3.9% identify as black. There are 156 undergraduate degree programs and 139 graduate programs.

Texas is one of the most restrictive states for voting. In order to register someone to vote, an individual must be trained as a Volunteer Deputy Registrar (VDR) for his or her specific county. This training expires at the end of every even numbered year and the VDR must be retrained. There is no online or same-day voter registration in Texas. Additionally, there are very specific laws in Texas about IDs – the most common IDs used by UT Austin students are Texas licenses and passports, but student ids are not included as appropriate identification by Texas law.

## About the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life exists to cultivate informed voters and active citizens. We do so through research, education, and outreach programs focused on three key pillars: civic discovery, young people, and civil dialogue.

Based in the nation's second most populous state at a premier public research university, the Annette Strauss Institute is aligned with the University's public role of designing and testing new ways of increasing civic involvement. It benefits from the collective expertise of scholars who are nationally renowned for their contributions to the study and development of civic participation and the conditions that give rise to or suppress engagement. Dedicated to applied research, the institute focuses on how new technologies of communication and innovative outreach can be used to increase political understanding and participation.

## About TX Votes

TX Votes is a student organization that organizes voter registration and voter education activities to increase campus civic engagement and electoral awareness.

TX Votes is a student organization at the University of Texas at Austin that invites students campus wide to increase electoral participation and create more voters and better citizens. Each election cycle, TX Votes, in partnership with the Annette Strauss Institute, organizes and coordinates Get Out the Vote activities including registration booths, deputization sessions, and campus competitions. During off election cycles, TX Votes educates the UT community and engages in respectful and civil discourse on important issues. In addition to its relationship with the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, TX Votes also works closely with the Austin-Area League of Women Voters, the Foundation for Civic Leadership, Students Learn Students Vote, the Austin Tech Alliance, the Harvard IOP National Campaign, and the Voter Registration Division of the Travis County Tax Office.

TX Votes acts as the facilitator between the ALL-IN Campus Democracy Challenge and UT Austin. TX Votes creates the campus plan with input from organizations across campus, as well as fields all communication between

## About the Civic Engagement Alliance

The Civic Engagement Alliance is a collaborative nonpartisan effort, convened by TX Votes, by organizations and institutes at the University of Texas at Austin to improve voter engagement, as well as other forms of civic engagement, on campus. Participation is very simple, organizations choose a rep to attend one meeting per semester, register the students in your organization to vote, and share nonpartisan voting information around election time. This collaborative effort has been a contributing effort for improved voter engagement on campus.

### Goals for CEA next year

After inspecting 2014 and 2016 voter turnout rates, the Civic Engagement Alliance set the following voter registration and turnout goals:

- 25% voter turnout goal
- 85% voter registration goal

The following activities are goals made by the CEA for the next year:

# Voter Registration

## VDR Trainings

In 2016, over 200 students were trained as Volunteer Deputy Registrars. In 2018, the goal is to ensure we have at least 200 students trained as VDRs. To do this, we will need to continue to host more trainings on campus. We aim to host at least five trainings as soon as students return to campus for the Spring 2018 semester. We aim to host more than five trainings as soon as students return to campus for the Fall 2019 semester.

## Tabling

Many of the Civic Engagement Alliance organizations will table across campus during the voter registration period of the election. At least two organizations, TX Votes and University Democrats plan to register students every day leading up to the Primary and the Midterm elections. Additionally, CEA organizations will coordinate to ensure that every table has enough volunteers and that they are spaced well throughout campus through a shared spreadsheet on Google Drive.

## Request Form

TX Votes has created a request form for leadership around campus to use in order to request VDRs attend their event. In the past, this form has been used primarily by professors to register their classes and student organizations to register students during their meetings. We are going to promote this request form more throughout the year to reach an even greater number of students.

## Last Day to Register to Vote Celebration

On the last day to register to vote, members of the Civic Engagement Alliance will gather on the steps of the UT Tower to register students to vote until midnight. This event will be a way to ensure that all students who want to register to vote can, and that extra attention is brought that it is the last day to register to vote in Texas.

## Email all professors teaching classes

TX Votes is currently collecting the email addresses of all professors teaching during the Spring 2018 semester. They will receive an email asking for time in their classes to register students and offer the option of a presentation on voting in the state of Texas.

## Grad Student Orientation

The Voting Graduate Student Agency, which is part of the Graduate Student Assembly, will invite Graduate Coordinators in all areas of study to include voter registration and voter information presentations at all graduate student orientations. They will also table at the school-wide graduate student orientation.

## Residence Life

Residence Life will host a VDR trainings for any interested Resident Assistants (RAs). These RAs will register their residents to vote and allow other RAs to send their residents to them for voter registration. TX Votes will also provide bulletin board materials on voting and host information events for any RAs who are interested.

## Greek Efforts

Our first effort with Greek life is to increase the number of fraternities and sororities in the CEA. TX Votes will also try to visit at least two sororities during their Monday meetings to register their members to vote.

## Voter Education

### Pick Your Politician Contest

TX Votes plans to continue to host the “Pick Your Politician Contest” for its third and fourth times in 2018. This contest invites students around campus to guess which politicians will win the Texas primary and the midterm election. Students will be offered access to the Austin-Area League of Women Voters’ Nonpartisan Voting Guides to provide reliable and nonpartisan information on the candidates and issues on the ballot. The individual who has the most correct will win a prize.

### National Voter Registration Day Trivia

To celebrate National Voter Registration Day, TX Votes will host a Political Trivia Night. Students will be registered to vote at the event and also learn more about politics at local, state, and national levels. This event will take place online and in-person.

## University Democrats/College Republicans Debate

Traditionally, the University Democrats and College Republicans hold a debate leading up to the election on issues that are important to college students and also being used on the campaign trail by Republicans and Democrats.

## On Campus Speakers

Many member organizations of the CEA plan to have speakers on campus who will talk about the importance of voting to members of their organizations. In the past, these speakers have included potential candidates, party chairs, nonprofit leadership, and small business owners.

## Social Media Campaign

Members of the CEA will also promote voting through their social media channels. In addition, the CEA is hoping to create a social media campaign that would include messages from influential members of the UT community talking about why they believe it is important to vote.

## Other Events

### Parade to the Polls

We plan to host a Parade to the Polls as popularized at the University of Houston. With the support of student government, we will plan a party near one of the largest dorms on campus a few days into early voting that ends with the parade. We hope to call on famous UT alumni to lead the parade.

### Election Day Celebration

On Election Day, organizations will continue their traditions of asking students to vote via social media. TX Votes and University Democrats will table all day, with TX Votes offering thanks in the form of “Thank You” cards, cookies, and pies (for the “Piemary”). The day will end with a celebratory party for all volunteers and voters at a location near campus.

## Reminder Texts

TX Votes will send reminder texts leading up to the election, so students will know when and where to vote, in addition to answering any question texts that respond. This will be done using the Remind Educational Text service. Students will be able to easily send a text to sign up for the reminders or give their information to a TX Votes member to sign up.

## Meet the Student Government Candidates

TX Votes believes that voting needs to be a habit that starts with the most local elections. For this reason, we will host our second annual “Meet the Candidates” event for student elections at UT Austin. In addition to the event, we will also create a nonpartisan voting guide for students to use when deciding on who to vote for in the student elections.

## STEM Focus

We know that the place for the most improvement for voter turnout among our students is with STEM students. Many degree programs in the STEM areas recorded voter registration rates over 10% lower than the campus average. For that reason, TX Votes has created a STEM Committee to concentrate on this challenge. The committee has already gained support from Computer Science professors and some STEM-oriented student organizations. In the upcoming year, TX Votes aims to create relationships with more STEM professors and student organizations, as well as receive permission to register students to vote in these classes and table in the STEM buildings.

## Big 12 Voting Challenge

With support from the Foundation for Civic Leadership, TX Votes is working to establish the Big 12 Voting Challenge. This challenge will be similar in structure to SoCon Votes & Big 10 Voting Challenge. There will be a dedicated student intern working on the project to promote voter engagement not just at UT, but our entire conference.