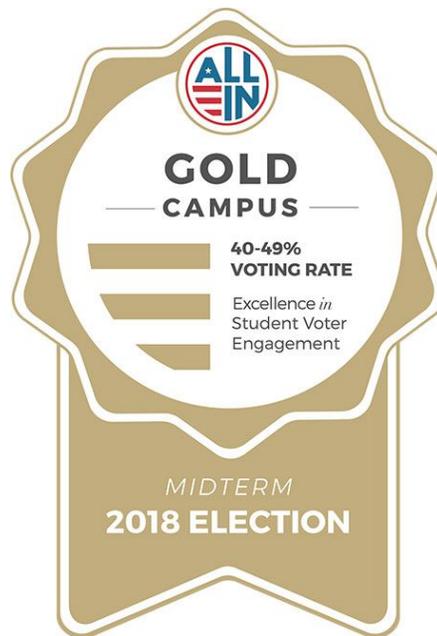




Northeastern University



ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE

2020 DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

ACTION PLAN

January 2020



I. Executive Summary

Northeastern University is committed to fostering an environment of democratic engagement. The purpose of this plan is to outline the goals and strategies Northeastern will implement in 2020 and beyond to encourage voter education, registration and participation and overall civic engagement. In the first year, the plan will be implemented on Northeastern's Boston campus with the undergraduate, graduate, and law student communities, as well as faculty, staff, and administrators. The longer term goals include engaging the Northeastern community on the satellite campuses across the US. Although many of the short-term goals included in this plan are focused on increasing voter participation in the 2020 election, we will continue to use and modify the strategies outlined in this plan to increase voter participation and overall civic engagement year by year, and to ensure sustainable practices are put in place to prioritize democratic learning and engagement for all community members.



II. Leadership

Northeastern Faculty and Staff

Hilary Sullivan

Community Service & Civic Engagement, City & Community Engagement

Ted Landmark

Distinguished Professor and Director, Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy

Jennie Stephens, PhD

Director, School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs

David Lazer, PhD

Distinguished Professor, College of Social Science and Humanities and Khoury College

Costas Panagopoulos, PhD

Professor & Interim Chair, Department of Political Science

Emily Hardman

Director, Student Programming and Communications

Student Groups

Student Government Association (SGA)

Ignite at Northeastern

Northeastern University College Democrats

Northeastern University College Republicans

Resident Student Association

Student Affairs

Madeleine Estabrook

Senior Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

Community/National Organizations

All In Campus Democracy Challenge

Voter Friendly Campus

NASPA Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

Local elections office coordination

City of Boston: Election Department



III. Commitment

In Northeastern’s 2025 academic plan we state: ‘We will serve as a national model for community engagement in the neighborhoods surrounding our campuses, providing our students with opportunities to develop their cultural agility in real-world settings as the university further networks with our community partners’. Northeastern’s experiential education model ensures that students not only learn knowledge and concepts in the classroom but gain real-life experiences as a means to growing as civic-minded individuals who are empowered to be changemakers in their community.

Through this lens, the University is in full support of the efforts to mobilize voter engagement. The University has recently signed off on a 3-year TurboVote contract, has shifted job responsibilities for several staff and faculty members to allow for increased time and attention to this, and has the support of a growing support of high level staff and faculty to move this work forward.



IV. Landscape

In the last midterm election, student voting more than doubled at campuses across the country. We are thrilled to share that Northeastern was no exception, with eligible student voting rates growing nearly 24 percentage points, from 18.8% participation in the 2014 midterm elections to 42.6% in 2018. We were thrilled to see this progress and hope to expand institutional efforts to ensure that all eligible Northeastern students are registered to vote. Exercising the right to vote is, perhaps, our nation's most fundamental freedom. Our institution has a responsibility to ensure that every eligible student is registered and empowered to vote and we are committed to fulfilling this responsibility.

In 2016, the Northeastern Student Government Association (SGA) created the Northeastern Votes Coalition. This was a group of 18 student organizations that used social media and on-campus tabling to register students and encourage them to vote. The group has since lost momentum, but we are working to re-engage and re-energize this critical group.

Northeastern recently re-committed to utilizing the paid version of the **TurboVote** system for the next three years through 2023. Our contract was recently finalized and our site launched in January. This TurboVote system will help us evaluate the impact that our events and programs are having on student registration. We envision using this system at the Boston campus, embedding it in websites, and possibly using it at our satellite campuses across the US.

In November 2019, the CCE sent two students to the Boston Votes Conference at the Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics. The students talked with peer institutions in Boston about what they are doing to increase democratic engagement and brought those ideas back to Northeastern.

There are a variety of faculty initiatives regarding voter engagement research. In creating a campus-wide committee, we hope to further engage these faculty by learning from their research and utilizing that research to strengthen the engagement of our community. We also hope to learn about and institutionalize the practice of faculty members teaching about voter engagement in in-person and online courses.



V. Goals

SHORT-TERM GOALS

- Form a university-wide voter engagement committee in 2020 which includes key faculty, staff, and student group representatives
 - Increase eligible student voter turnout rate 10 percentage points in the 2020 election (moving from 56.9% in 2016 to at least 67%)
 - Reinvigorate the student-led Northeastern Votes Coalition of student groups in 2020 and offer support for developing a more sustainable model
 - Discuss incorporating various opportunities to implement voter registration in school activities such as summer and winter orientations
 - Increase eligible student voter turnout rate 5 percentage points in the 2022 midterm elections (moving from 42.6% in 2018 to at least 47.6% in 2022)
-

LONG-TERM GOALS

- Incorporate voter registration in orientation programming
 - Increase voter registration to 90% of eligible students by 2023
 - Expand voter engagement efforts at Northeastern's satellite campuses (Charlotte, Seattle, Silicon Valley)
 - Create a sustainable committee structure to ensure voter engagement events do not happen only in presidential election years
 - Include language about voter engagement in next strategic plan
-



VI. National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)



+23.8 CHANGE FROM 2014

Voting and Registration Rates

	2014	2018	Change
Total student enrollment	23,914	24,177	263
Age under 18/Unknown	(118)	(106)	
IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens	n/a	n/a	
FERPA records blocked	(1,813)	(1,564)	
Total eligible voters	21,983	22,507	524
Number of students who registered	14,956	16,856	1,900
Number of students who voted	4,127	9,578	5,451
Registration rate	68.8%	74.9%	6.9
Voting rate of registered students	27.6%	56.8%	29.2
Voting rate	18.8%	42.6%	23.8
Difference from all institutions	-0.9	+3.5	



VII. Strategy

CAMPUS INITIATIVES

In 2016, the Northeastern Student Government Association (SGA) created the **Northeastern Votes Coalition**. This was a group of 18 student organizations that used social media and on-campus tabling to register students and encourage them to vote. In the end they were able to register over 1,300 students.

In 2018, Northeastern joined the **ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge** and was recognized at their annual award ceremony with a Gold Rating for our 43% midterm voter turnout rates (based on recent NSLVE data). In 2020 Northeastern was accepted to be a Voter Friendly Campus by the Campus Votes Project.

Examples of what we're already doing:

- Formed coalition of staff and students
- Submitted NSLVE reauthorization form
- Hold voter registration events across campus
- Host and publicize watch parties for debates
- Offer classes (experiential or service-learning) to foster political learning

PLANS MOVING FORWARD

In 2020, the newly formed Voter Engagement Coalition will work to streamline and coordinate the many small efforts happening across campus, and institutionalize the practice of voter registration and education.

In 2020, our voter turnout goal is 65%, a 10 percentage point increase from the previous presidential election cycle. We plan to do so with strategies outlined in this plan.

Examples of what we could be doing:

- Coordinate and track election engagement efforts across campus
- Incorporate key election dates in to University calendar
- We will be sending a campus-wide email on how to register at local address or request absentee ballot
- Use social media to encourage voter registration
- Coordinate with Residential Life to increase voter registration and education in residence hall programming and curriculum



VII. Strategy

LOCAL INITIATIVES

In November 2019, the CCE sent two students to the Boston Votes Conference at the Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics. The students talked with peer institutions in Boston about what they are doing to increase democratic engagement and brought those ideas back to Northeastern.

Lessons Learned:

- Ideas for voter registration events that can bring in the most students
- Suggestions for events and opportunities for voter education
- Emphasis on making voting an institutional responsibility rather than an extracurricular
- Focus on making all events inclusive and recognizing that not all students can vote (such as international students and undocumented students)

PLANS MOVING FORWARD

Based on actions taken by peer institutions in Boston, we outlined several potential actions to take:

- Create voter registration brand
- Partner with other Boston colleges to register everyone at big sports events
- Go to freshman classes to increase interest and engagement
- Offer free food at registration events
- Offer voter registration at orientation
- Host more debate watch parties and issue-based events
- Increase access to voting opportunities
- Make voting an institutional responsibility, not an extracurricular
- Involve representatives and team members from different clubs and groups
- Train representatives and team members to be inclusive and sensitive to all students regardless of their ability to vote

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Northeastern recently collaborated with colleagues from other Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) schools for a \$40,000 innovation & collaboration (IN/CO) grant to bring faculty, staff, and students from various institutions together to plan and share resources.

PLANS MOVING FORWARD

Unfortunately, we were not successful in receiving this grant but this group of universities that make up the CAA remain committed. We plan to meet in the near future to discuss our plans further.



VIII. Timeline

Spring 2020

Statement: Building Northeastern Voting Coalition 2020

- ❖ Outreach to student organizations, faculty, and administrators to join coalition
 - ❖ Plan the first NVC meeting in February 2020 with members and continue building short-term and long-term expectations, goals, and strategies
 - ❖ Begin implementing Turbo Vote at various events
-

Summer 2020

Statement: Continue push for voter registration

- ❖ Plan and implement voter registration at orientation sessions for incoming students and families
 - ❖ Hold information session for NU.in students and families of participating in the 2020 election while abroad
-

Fall 2020

Statement: Final push for increasing voter registration rates and push for voter participation in November

- ❖ Implement voter registration drives at move-in and introduction courses for freshmen
- ❖ Social media campaign to inform out-of-state students and other university members of deadlines for absentee ballots



IX. Reporting

Northeastern's action plan, data, and reports are publically available and available on campus.

X. Evaluation

Quantitative measures may include:

- Use TurboVote admin site to review engagement of NU community, and use customized URLs to evaluate effectiveness of various types of voter registration events
- Analyze NSLVE data released after every midterm and presidential election cycle
- Implement student surveys to analyze the growth of an environment of democratic engagement
- Implement evaluations from our coalition members throughout the year

Qualitative measures may include:

- Implement evaluations from our coalition members throughout the year
- Interview students to gauge their interest in and knowledge of the voting process
- Collaborate with faculty members on other qualitative studies

Questions related to this action plan should be addressed to :

Hilary Sullivan

Hilary Sullivan, Director, Community Service & Civic Engagement
Office of City & Community Engagement, Northeastern University
320 Huntington Ave, Hastings Hall Suite 232
Boston, MA 02115
(617) 373-5838 | h.sullivan@northeastern.edu