

NSLVE ALL IN CHALLENGE Rice University's action plan

Rice University: Overview and Student Body

Rice University is a private research university located in Houston, Texas. It has a total undergraduate enrollment of 3,893, and a graduate student enrollment of 2,962. Rice has a residential college system, and 72% of undergraduates live on campus in residential college housing. Thirty-eight percent of Rice undergraduates are from Texas, 50% are from other US states, and 12% are international students. Thirty-seven percent of undergraduate students are Anglo-American, 24% are Asian-American, 14% are Latino/Hispanic, 4% are African American, 4% are multiracial, and 12% are foreign nationals. By comparison, the population of the city of Houston is 37% Anglo, 37% Latino/Hispanic, 17% African American and 8% Asian. Thirty-eight percent of full-time undergraduates receive some kind of need-based financial aid. The most popular majors at Rice University include: Biochemistry, Economics, Chemical Engineering, Computer and Information Sciences, and Mechanical Engineering.

Civic and Political Engagement at Rice University

The Center for Civic Leadership (CCL) is the heart of civic engagement activity at Rice University. The CCL offers a range of experiential opportunities— service, advocacy, civic research, and mentorship--through which students can develop their civic leadership capacities. The CCL partners with organizations working in Houston, domestically and internationally on a range of social issues, including civic engagement. For example, through the CCL's Houston Action Research Team and Capstone programs, Rice students partnered with Mi Familia Vota, a national 501(c)(4) civic engagement organization that advocates on social and economic issues that impact the Latino community, to design both a youth leadership program and a civic empowerment curriculum for Houston high school seniors.

The CCL promotes civic engagement and action across Rice's campus more broadly through its RICEngaged initiative, which serves to connect students, faculty, and community partners with similar interests and goals. The aim of this initiative is to leverage shared values to make every advocacy and engagement effort as effective as possible and to harness the energy across campus and beyond the hedges. Voter and election related activities are one such area in which the CCL acts as campus coordinator.

Through RicEngaged, the CCL partners with a number of civic- and politically-focused student groups at Rice University. These include:

- Civic Duty Rice
- Rice Chapter of American Association of University Women (AAUW)
- Baker Institute Student Forum (BISF)
- Rice University Young Democrats

- Rice University College Republicans

Additionally, a group of women faculty from across the academic colleges have expressed interest in promoting voter registration and voter mobilization for the 2018 midterm elections. A number have already received VDVR training and have volunteered to help with voter registration and GOTV efforts on campus in Fall 2018.

Recent Voter and Election Activities at Rice University

Leading up to the 2016 Presidential Election, the CCL contributed to efforts to get Rice students voting and, to a lesser extent, to stimulate voting “beyond the hedges” in community partner-identified areas. The CCL co-hosted a campus voter registrar training with the Rice Chapter of American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the Harris County Tax Assessor’s Office and registered approximately 50 students, faculty/staff, and community members.

The CCL also supported several student-run events including a presidential watch party hosted by the Baker Institute Student Forum (BISF) and a voter drive event for National Voter Registration Day, hosted by AAUW.

The CCL collaborated with the Political Science Department, BISF, Rice Democrats, and AAUW to host a campus-wide Election Watch Party on the evening of the November 8, 2016 election. The party began at 6pm and included pizza and snacks, a giant cake of the U.S., election-themed decorations and Photo Booth, rounds of trivia with prizes, and of course, the live streaming of election results coverage. Prior to the party, the Political Science Department also organized an election predictions contest with prizes.

The CCL also collaborated with Baker Ripley (a Houston-based and community focused non-profit organization) to conduct voter canvassing out of their Aldine (north Houston) location. Approximately 15 students/faculty/staff completed block walking to get out the vote on a Saturday in October as part of a larger group of Baker Ripley volunteers.

Since the 2016 election, RicEngaged partners have continued to host opportunities for civic and political engagement.

In September 2017, Civic Duty Rice and AAUW hosted a voter registration event on campus ahead of the November 2017 elections.

In October 2017, Civic Duty hosted a HISD candidate forum on campus.

In February of 2018, Civic Duty Rice and the Rice Young Democrats hosted a candidate forum for the TX-07 Congressional District election.

In February of 2018, Civic Duty and AAUW hosted a VDVR training on campus.

In February and March of 2018, Civic Duty joined non-profit Baker Ripley for GOTV canvassing and phone banking events.

In March of 2018, Civic Duty Rice provided free transportation to the Democratic polling station off campus during early voting and on election day (Republican polling station was located on campus).

In April 2018, Civic Duty Rice co-hosted a Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar (VDVR) training with the American Association of University Women, Rice Republicans, Rice Democrats, and the Center for Civic Leadership. Over 50 people were deputized.

Also in April of 2018, Civic Duty Rice and the CCL co-hosted Owls In Office, a panel discussion of Rice alumni who have or currently hold political offices, including former Houston Mayor, Annise Parker, Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, and HISD Board Trustee Sue Diegaard.

Rice University's All In Challenge plan for the 2018 midterm elections

The 2017 NSLVE Campus Report for Rice University finds that, in 2016, the majority (82.5%) of Rice students were registered to vote (an increase from 77% registration rate in 2012), but that only 66% of those students voted in the 2016 election. In 2012, only 54% of registered students voted in the midterm election. The report finds that voting rates are lower among first year students than upperclassmen and that voting rates differ significantly by academic major. These findings suggest a need to focus voter mobilization efforts on first year students as well as students across all academic fields (especially STEM) and to pair efforts to maximize voter registration with voter mobilization and turnout efforts.

In anticipation of the 2018 midterm elections, Rice's All In Committee will focus on (1) maximizing voter registration, (2) increasing voter turnout, and (3) educating our campus community on candidates and ballot issues. The following events and activities will help us to meet those goals.

New student political awareness and voter mobilization, August 12-18, 2018: During one lunch period of O-Week (new student orientation), representatives from Civic Duty Rice, the Rice College Republicans and the Rice Young Democrats will be on hand to register students to vote or assist them in changing their voter registration status, and meet with new students to introduce and answer questions about their student organizations and the work they do on campus.

Members of the Rice All In Challenge committee are working to secure a voter registration table at the academic fair for new students on August 14, 2018. This table will be located next to the Center for Civic Leadership's table, and would be staffed by VDVR-trained students from Civic Duty and/or AAUW and faculty. It will offer students the opportunity to register to vote, change their state voter registration, and learn about procedures and deadlines for absentee ballot submission and other election-related activities.

Throughout O-Week, student representatives from Civic Duty Rice, Rice Young Democrats, and Rice College Republicans plan to visit each of the residential colleges to get out the word about voter registration and the importance of voting and civic education and participation, more broadly.

Campus-wide student voter mobilization, August 20-31, 2018:

During the first two weeks of classes, Civic Duty will station one or more VDVRs every day in each of the six residential college food severies. It will offer all students the opportunity to register to vote, change their state voter registration, and learn about procedures and deadlines for absentee ballot submission and other election-related activities. This effort will facilitate student outreach across majors and encourage residential college-based voter mobilization.

Civic Duty Rice will set up a table inside the student activities fair (held during the first week of classes) that will offers voter registration services and information to all students.

September 25, National Voter Registration Day

Civic Duty Rice will partner with the Center for Civic Leadership to host voter and civic engagement-related events and activities throughout the day. Details to follow.

September 8, 2018: Houston Colleges Youth Summit

A non-partisan, inter-university summit organized by student leaders from between five and seven Houston area colleges and universities, including: Rice University, University of Houston, University of Houston Downtown, Houston Baptist University, St. Thomas University, Lone Star College, and Houston Community College. The aim of the event is to educate, encourage and excite Houston area college students about voting in the 2018 midterm elections. Topics will include: youth power, Houston voting trends, how to set civic priorities, and how to create structural change. The event will feature speakers from each campus's Student Association President and College Republican and College Democrat organizations, leaders of civic-focused organizations, as well as topical experts and a keynote speaker. Breakout groups will give students opportunities to discuss their civic priorities as well as important political and ballot issues. The event will be followed by the release of a set of civic priorities and actions to be taken up by each campus.

Last Chance Voter Registration Drive, October 2-4, 2018

The deadline to register to vote for the 2018 midterm elections is October 9. However, October 6-8 is Rice University's fall recess. All In Challenge partners, including Civic Duty Rice, will host a final voter registration drive in the college severies to maximize voter registration among Rice students ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.

Election Watch Party, November 6, 2018

The Center for Civic Leadership and Civic Duty Rice will co-host a midterm election watch party for the Rice community.