

UCLA Voter Engagement Action Plan

Executive Summary:

This action plan was developed in October 2019 by the BruinsVote Coalition to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at UCLA. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over the next year from Fall 2019 through Fall 2020 on and around our campus in Los Angeles, CA. This plan will be implemented by the BruinsVote Coalition recruited by the current coalition leadership comprised of CALPIRG Students, USAC EVP's office, and the Director of Leadership and Engagement in the Office of Student Affairs in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize UCLA's commitment to civic learning democratic engagement and youth participation in elections.

Leadership:

The leadership of the BruinsVote Coalition is made up of student groups and administrators, specifically CALPIRG at UCLA's New Voters Project, the Undergraduate Student Associated Council External Vice President's Office, and the Director of Leadership and Engagement in the Office of Student Affairs. The Coalition will also include multiple student organizations on campus in order to promote civic engagement in all campus communities, student government offices, faculty, the Office of Residential Life, the Center for Community Learning, the Community Programs Office, and the Daily Bruin campus newspaper, all of whom are currently being reached out to by the Coalition leadership. The BruinsVote Coalition has an ongoing relationship with the LA County Registrar's office and has been coordinating since past election cycles, mainly through the Director of Leadership and Engagement. The Coalition has the support of upper administration through the Office of Student Affairs, including the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. The Coalition will meet monthly (or more often, if needed) leading up to the primaries and bi-weekly (or more often, if needed) leading up to the presidential elections.

Commitment:

In regards to civic learning and democratic engagement, our campus mission statement mentions education, research, service, and civic engagement as fundamental to our mission as a public university. Our campus values are integrity, excellence, accountability, respect, and service, and our principles of community highlight the value of diversity and inclusion. Our campus strategic plan mentions a commitment to civic engagement, inclusion, and education. We can point to the above institutional commitments to support our work. We have seen aspects of democratic engagement in our campus culture, through political clubs, campus leaders promoting voting, voter registration tables and National Voter Registration Day events, on campus polling places, and protests. However the emphasis on civic learning could definitely be

increased, especially voter education through resources for election information and including civic learning into the educational curriculum. Additionally, the University of California has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of California Secretary of State's Office to promote and implement practices to foster student voter registrations and voting.

Landscape:

Based off of official data from UCLA, our campus has 45,921 students enrolled, and 12% of undergraduate students are international students. The report for our campus from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement for the 2018 election shows that we had a registration rate of 77.4% and a voting rate of 44.5%. During this year our voting and registration rate increased, and were higher than the national average. Our voting rate was shown to have increased by 300% since the previous midterm election in 2014. However, some departments had much lower rates of voting, with 22% of computer science majors, 29% of engineering majors, and 21% of math majors. We face challenges in engaging these specific departments, especially through academic avenues. While we had an increase in turnout, we also strive to affect the campus culture around voting to further improve. Our strengths in the coming year include an experienced leadership team and good relationships with administrators, student organizations focused on peer-to-peer registration efforts, and our success the previous year in bringing a vote center to campus for 2020 where anyone can same-day register and conditionally vote.

Goals:

Our short term goals are to establish regular meetings of our BruinsVote coalition and outreach to all campus stakeholders to join our coalition, help register 500 students to vote by the march primary elections and 2500 by the general elections, and establish an autofilled voter registration portal on our campus website that connects directly with the Secretary of State.

Our long term goals are to establish permanent funding and space reservations for the Vote Center, to ensure we can have one on campus for all future elections, incorporate civic engagement in campus curriculum through permanent democracy classes and faculty buy-in, and establish connections with community organizations on campus to bring inclusivity and create a campus culture of voting. The ultimate goal is to create a climate in which virtually all students register, become informed voters, and vote on a regular basis.

Strategy:

Our strategy involves several components: Institutionalization, Public Information Campaign, and Peer-to-Peer Registration and Get Out The Vote work.

On the institutionalization side, we have worked to bring a Vote Center to campus, where students, faculty, and staff can all have one centralized polling place, that also serves as a

same-day registration and conditional voting site. We have also incorporated the CAStudentVote registration website into the course registration website (MyUCLA.edu), which is designed by students to better facilitate online voter registration and allows students to opt in to sharing their contact information and receiving nonpartisan election information. Additionally, the office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs is working with the California Secretary of State on an online student voter registration portal within the MyUCLA website that prepopulates an electronic voter registration form with information already in the MyUCLA system and allows students to review and submit the form online to the California Secretary of State.

For the Public Information Campaign, the goal is to inform students about the aforementioned systems to make voter registration and voting easier and why voting matters. This campaign involves messaging to new or incoming students about voting at UCLA through the New Student and Transfer Orientation, including a unit in the orientation sessions and an informational flyer in the orientation packet. It also involves the student friendly website BruinsVote.ucla.edu that includes information on voter registration, election education, reliable external sites of voter information, a video on the importance of voting, and where to vote at UCLA. Another aspect of this campaign is a campus-wide email from university leaders to encourage voting, and student to student reminder emails and texts on Election Day. There will also be special targeting towards groups which have historically low registration and voter turnout such as: Engineering, Physical Sciences, Computer Science and, perhaps, students from particular socioeconomic or race/ethnic origins who are less likely to vote. These groups will be determined with feedback from student groups and from user data from myUCLA.

For the on the ground voter registration and get out the vote campaign, CALPIRG Students and the USAC EVP office will lead student groups in the BruinsVote Coalition in peer to peer registration efforts, which have been proven to be one of the most effective ways to engage our fellow students. Our focus is on UCLA students registering and voting in the district where they live and go to school (on or near to campus) rather than at their previous home or other address for the following reasons: UCLA students are more likely to vote in person than by mail. Vote by mail (VBM) requires preparing for elections far in advance, requesting a VBM ballot for their new address, retrieving said ballot from the mail, completing the ballot, getting a stamp, and sending it back on time. Many students find this difficult to do. Also, While some students would prefer to keep their voter registration at their previous residence (home), students registered at UCLA are more likely to show up and vote in person than to vote in person at their previous residence as they are away at school. However, the campaign will be inclusive to provide information and assistance for any student who is eligible to vote to determine how and whether to provide students who want to vote in their home state or district, information and assistance in doing so. Student groups will also lead on the ground efforts to “Get Out The Vote” to mobilize students to vote and provide nonpartisan election information, and to help students

who opted into providing their contact information through the CAStudentVote website or through in person Pledges to Vote make their plan to get to the polls.

We also have an evaluation system to measure success and inform future plans. In addition to utilizing results from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), we will conduct two anonymous web or phone-based surveys of a random sample of students about whether they are aware of the new voter registration tool available, whether they have registered online or in some other way, and whether they intend to vote. The first survey will be conducted in the first week of Fall quarter and the second will be conducted right before the November election. Second, we will identify measures we can use to determine how many students registered and voted. Ideas include: (1) adding a button on the MyUCLA voter registration portal that lets students indicate “I have already registered to vote” in order to improve accuracy of voter registration totals, (2) adding a counter on the MyUCLA portal which counts the number of voter registrations completed and submitted, and (3) conducting exit poll surveys in Ackerman to collect data from voters on their majors at UCLA to measure voting by major, school, and unit.