



Voter Friendly Campus Designation Final Reports

Penn Leads the Vote ("PLTV"), the university-sponsored and student-run voter engagement initiative, adopted a four step approach to not only order to turn out voters last fall, but to build engaged citizens that are committed to voting for years to come.

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Overview

Our primary objectives last fall were specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound: increase the number of registered voters on campus from 75% to 90%, increase voter turnout from 19.8% to 40%, and increase voter turnout 5% in each discipline. The

NSLVE data will inform us as to whether or not we reached these goals, therefore we don't know right away whether or not our efforts to turn out the vote were successful. However, right away, we were successful as PLTV didn't disintegrate after the election. If we are able to keep the conversation going, host events, engage the Penn community in an ongoing political discussion, leverage our resources to aid in community engagement outside of our campus, and be a constant presence, that will be a tremendous success.

PLTV successfully reached its goals for the 2018 election. Our flagship events were attended by hundreds of students and we successfully networked with a majority of the student body directly or through our partner organizations in the months leading up to the midterm election. Although NSLVE data has not been released, statistics from Penn's Office of Government and Community Affairs and the Philadelphia City Commissioner suggest that on-campus, in-person voter turnout went up 350% from the last midterm for on-campus wards. PLTV also worked with a communications class that conducted research on ways to improve voter turnout using methods such as identity priming. Unfortunately, none of their findings were statistically significant, however, this partnership will allow us to work with more professors and classes in the future and contribute to improving academic understanding on voter behaviors. As we move into future elections, we are conducting a thorough internal analysis and which actions successfully engaged voters and which did not. This analysis will heavily influence our actions going forward.

Coalition

Penn Leads the Vote worked in conjunction with national organizations and projects such as: the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP), the Campus Vote Project, and the Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF); Penn offices such as: The Office of Community and Government Affairs (OGCA), the Robert A. Fox Leadership Program, and the Netter Center for Community Partnership. These organizations have been instrumental in helping us to fund campus events and pay our staff.

We also teamed with student run groups such as: the Undergraduate Assembly, the Graduate and Professional Student Association, the Penn Law American Constitution Society, Penn Democrats, College Republicans, the Penn Government and Politics Association, and the Penn Political Coalition. The groups played an integral role working with campus leadership and planning the National Voter Registration Day Event.

Going forward, we plan to bring non-political student groups into the fold: Greeks, performance clubs, sports teams, language clubs, etc. Our goal is to communicate with students through their chosen social networks. We hope to get club presidents and team captains on board to encourage their members to register, educate themselves, and then vote. We plan to leverage these communities and relationships in order to build a community of voters and create a social norm of engagement and participation. PLTV is also implementing a Faculty Advisory Board that will help advise PLTV and bridge the gap between the faculty and the organization in the hopes of creating a more successful partnership in future elections.

Analysis of Work

Voter Registration

PLTV in conjunction with the Undergraduate Assembly (UA), and the Graduate and Professional Student Association, and Penn Law's American Constitution Society hosted a nonpartisan registration even on Tuesday September 25. Our goals included: fostering excitement for the Midterm Elections, getting students registered to vote, helping students to identify their polling places, and creating election day plans. We had a "Why I Vote" photobooth, cornhole trivia, food, free swag, and performances by various campus groups. We believed this fun, social event created a sense of community and expectation around civic engagement. The event was staffed by clearly identifiable volunteers equipped with the necessary voter registration materials, ready to answer questions and register people on the spot. Speakers at the event included Penn President Amy Gutmann and Benjamin Franklin Presidential Practice Professor and former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden. This is the first time in years that such an event has been held on Penn's campus and was attended by around 700 people, far surpassing our expectations. Additionally, PLTV either hosted or supported coalition members in hosting voter registration tables around campus. It should be noted that a vast majority of eligible students are registered to vote, where the numbers lack are how many turn out to the polls.

Voter Education

PLTV addressed voter education with a multi-pronged approach. Our talented social media team created a website with voter information, FAQs and a contact form and is actively building our presence on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. These platforms were crucial in the 2016 presidential dialogue and will only become more important as young voters increasingly obtain news through their online networks. Our promotions teams reached out to all campus groups and affiliations: sports teams, language and culture clubs, Greeks, performance groups, graduate schools, and college houses (dorms). We worked with a variety of leaders in order to disseminate crucial information regarding issues, candidates, and election day procedures. This "reverse door knocking" will be key as we work to develop the community mindset that at Penn, voting is the norm. Additionally, we partnered with Penn's Government and Politics Association in hosting events at every on-campus dormitory on the election and voting regulations/procedures.

Voter Turnout

Our social media and promotions teams went into high gear in the days leading up to the election. Our primary objective was to talk to as many people as possible about their election day plan. Who are they going with? Where is their polling place? What time are they going? We encouraged students to make it social and commit to one another. Studies have shown that this is highly effective in increasing turnout. Because almost everyone enjoys a bit of friendly competition, we hosted a mini RA/GA competition that pitted different halls against each other with a reward for the hall with the highest voter turnout. About a week before election day, we hung a banner over the central walk of campus, reminding students about the election and providing them our website with resources. Additionally, we partnered with the Sachs Program for Arts in hosting a voting-related lawsign contest open to the wider student body. The top two submissions were printed and put out around campus in the days before the election. MUSE, a student consulting group, created a mural that depicted why voting matters at PLTV's request. This mural was hung up in the student union and impressed President Gutmann so much that she purchased it after the election. PLTV staffed tables in central locations and offered assistance to voters who had last minute questions and handed out swag on the day of and day before the election. Finally, PLTV created a "Voter Captain" program that aimed to recruit student leaders across campus to serve as voting ambassadors and leaders within their respective circles. We had over thirty captains for the midterm election, and provided them with voter guides for distribution to their groups. PLTV hosted an Election Day Celebration with free food, a photobooth, games, music, and a visit from President Gutmann and Provost Pritchett. The objective of the event was to celebrate voting and encourage those who hadn't gone to the polls yet to do so or ask last minute questions, as the party was hosted while they were still open.

Building a Community of Voters

In the past, PLTV has slowly dissolved after each major election only to be reconstituted a year and half later. This year marks a shift in that mentality. Civic engagement is not just about September - November in even numbered years. We hope to continue the dialogue year round through a series of events and partnerships that engage the Penn and wider Philadelphia community. We partnered with the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood development (PHENND) and Vote That Jawn in order to build strong ties between the cities colleges and the community; we plan to strengthen these relationships in the coming months. We are also working with the Undergraduate Assembly in hosting a week of events related to civic engagement next fall.

Ballot Access

PLTV aimed to make the ballot as accessible to students as possible before the election. A ballot guide was posted on our website weeks prior and posters, flyers, banners, emails (through PLTV and other campus leaders), and social media posts constantly advised students to review the information prior to heading to the polls. At all our events and tabling, we distributed voter guides and answered on-the-spot questions. Lastly, our voter captains were provided with a throughout packet of information, which they distributed to their different circles within the University.

Successes

Flagship Events

Penn Leads the Vote's National Voter Registration Day event and Election Day Celebration were very successful. They engaged hundreds of students and helped established us as a credible organization. Our NVRD event gained a lot of attention from the University after an unannounced speech by President Gutmann and US VP Joe Biden. Gutmann returned to our Election Day Celebration and Provost Pritchett, which had a much more friendly, celebratory vibe. Both events helped establish a pro-voting culture on campus and showed the students and faculty that this is an issue the University is very eager to invest in and support.

Coalition Building

PLTV successfully established a large voter coalition and built partnerships with external and internal organizations. We established a "Voter Council" that brings student government and political groups together to promote voter engagement. Additionally, we created programs such as the "Voter Captains" that utilized the reverse door knocking method. In just three months, PLTV became a credible and influential group on campus, and in future semester hope to further our reach and build partnerships with other groups such as sports teams, Greek organizations, and more.

Access to Resources

PLTV ensured through dozens of in-person and virtual interactions that every student had easy access to voter education and registration materials. This included an abundance of promotional material all across campus in high traffic locations and emails both from PLTV itself and student government leaders (and voter captains in some cases). Our website featured easily digested tutorials on how to vote, a ballot guide, a more in-depth and cohesive voter information packet, events calendar, and past NSLVE data. Additionally, every student who lived in on-campus received a voting wallet card, which allowed them to set a voter plan before election day arrived and reminded them to view our website for all relevant information.

Barriers

Competition

Originally, we planned to host a campus wide hall vs hall voter competition. Unfortunately, we were unable to successfully engage with every RA/GA on campus and get them to agree to join in such a short amount of time. In future elections, we will have more time and resources to get the competition properly running.

Volunteers

PLTV hired a volunteer coordinator and had a very robust goal and plan to get passionate students involved in the organization's effort. We were successful in recruiting volunteers for our NVRD event, however organizing and training them in such a short amount of time proved difficult, and we failed to maintain more than a few willing to help us with tabling and other efforts later in the election cycle. In the future, we plan to have a more formal and robust volunteer program with proper organization and orientation.

Beyond 2018

PLTV will continue to engage the student body. We are currently partnering with the Undergraduate Assembly in hosting a civic engagement week this upcoming fall, and plan to have a few smaller events throughout this semester along the same lines. We are also preparing information and easily accessible materials on the 2019 local Philadelphia elections. However, the primaries are after school ends so our main efforts will be education instead of hands-on voter turnout. Beyond 2019, we are analyzing what strategies worked and which did not, and will begin making preparations for the national presidential elections 2020 based on those findings. For example, mail for on-campus dormitories takes a long time to process, which meant some students who requested absentee ballots later in the election cycle did not receive their ballots on time. We plan to work with residential and business services to see if there is a way to speed up the process. PLTV is also exploring the possibility of working with West Philadelphia schools that have a relationship with Penn's Netter Center for Community Partnerships in a mentorship capacity to local students interested in civic engagement.

NSLVE Data

When the University receives the NSLVE Data, PLTV leaders will meet with members of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships and Office of Government and Community Affairs to discuss the findings and see, with the assistance of our internal review, what should be repeated in future elections and what needs to be changed. We hope to also engage student government and the President and Provost in this discussions. We will then release the findings to the Daily Pennsylvanian (the main student-run publication) and other related groups. Additionally, we will meet with our faculty advisory board and voter engagement council. As with previous NSLVE reports, the data will be available as a PDF on PLTV's website.

Photos and Stories

With former VP Joe Biden, students get fired up to vote in midterm elections:

<https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/assisted-former-vp-joe-biden-penn-community-gets-fired-and-ready-vote-midterm-elections>

Less than 1 in 5 Penn students voted in 2014. Penn Leads the Vote aims to change that come Nov. 6.:

<https://www.thedp.com/article/2018/11/penn-leads-the-vote-midterm-elections-politics-student-turnout-upenn-philadelphia>

How Penn voted: A breakdown of campus's poll numbers:

https://www.thedp.com/article/2018/11/upenn-voting-midterm-elections-philadelphia-turnout-2018?utm_source=DP+Headlines+%26+Breaking+News&utm_campaign=7de4a4d4d3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_11_08_01_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_370b4800ba-7de4a4d4d3-354722869







