

# **TOWSON UNIVERSITY VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS DESIGNATION**

**2022 FINAL REPORT**



# OVERVIEW

Amid the challenges brought about by the year 2022, the Towson University community came together and demonstrated the importance placed on its voter engagement efforts. Through intentional events, resource sharing, ongoing communications, and storytelling, the TU Votes coalition made it their mission to ensure that as many students, faculty, and staff as possible were educated and empowered to vote safely, whether by mail or in person.

The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility in collaboration with members of the TU Votes coalition established several short-term and long-term goals.



# Short-Term Goals and Action Steps



## Voter Registration

Goal: A voter registration rate of at least **90%**, and a turnout rate of at least **60%** among the TU student body during the 2022 Midterm Election, narrowing the gap between voter registration and turnout to under **30%**.

Approach: We currently await the data provided by the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement to determine whether we met this goal. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility had a multi-pronged approach to increasing voter turnout by sending various campus-wide emails, writing posts in the TU Today daily newsletter, tabling to share voter engagement resources, promoting voter education tools on our website, led the efforts of the TU Votes Coalition to spread voter awareness among students, and more.

## Actions to Rebuild, Strengthen, and Sustain Efforts

Goal: With high staff turnover and our campus shifting back to in-person learning, TU is looking for methods to build back a strong on-campus voter engagement presence across the institution. This includes the revitalization of our voting coalition and student action group.

Approach: The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility revitalized the TU Votes Coalition in Fall 2022 to support the 2022 Midterm Election. The Coalition includes students, staff, and faculty representatives from across the institution. The Coalition brainstormed ideas, explored collaborations, and streamlined communication plans across the university. The Coalition also plans to continue meeting on a recurring basis to develop approaches for voter engagement between election cycles.

The TU Votes Coalition provided twelve programs during the Fall 2022 semester. More than 400 TU students participated. Some programs were connected to national initiatives, such as National Voter Registration Day and Voter Education Week. The TU Votes Coalition also developed new programs to help close the gap between voter registration and voter turnout, such as Party to the Polls, as well as programs to process the election results and identify pathways toward sustained civic engagement.



## Strategies to Engage with a Changed Student Body

Goal: In transitioning back to in-person and residential instruction, we are met with some challenges when tried and true pre-pandemic methods of engagement are not yielding the same results.

Approach: The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility invited student leaders from political organizations, the Student Government Association, and the University Residence Government to help develop programs that the TU student body would find engaging. The group focused on developing programs that included opportunities for voter education as well as community-building. For example, Party to the Polls was a community celebration of voting in the 2022 Midterm Election. The program included voter resources, games, food, and a scavenger hunt. More than 150 students participated.

The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility also hosted monthly Issues to Action workshops in collaboration with TU faculty and staff. Workshop topics included: informed down ballot voting, reflecting on the Gubernatorial Debate, and cultivating civic courage to actively participate in civic life.

In addition, the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility partnered with faculty to reach students in their classes. This included partnering with an advanced communication studies course to provide students with voter information and resources. Students then crafted and gave voter advocacy speeches on campus while promoting voter registration and educational resources to their peers and larger TU community.

The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility continued to provide voter engagement information and education in a virtual format to reach students who are not opting to participate in in-person programming. This included the office participating in national campaigns through social media channels like National Voter Education Week and Vote Early Day. In addition to the existing voter registration links on the TU Votes homepage and the course registration portal (PeopleSoft), we utilized links under [myTU StudentApps](#), and our Campus Labs Engage platform, [Involved @ TU](#) to share voter engagement information.



## Methods to Maintain Energy into Midterm Elections

Goal: The 2022 Midterm Election in Maryland includes an open gubernatorial race for a new governor. With a record number of students registering and voting in the 2020 Election, TU is looking for ways to feed that commitment and energy among students to carry us into a strong turnout for the Midterm Election.



Approach: To create excitement about the 2022 Midterm Elections across campus, the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility prioritized partnerships with TU students, staff, and faculty. The TU Votes Coalition served as a central organizing hub and ensured that students across departments and groups would receive information about the Midterm Election.

The TU Votes Coalition created several signature events:

- **Debate Watch Party:** In this program, participants watched the Maryland Gubernatorial Debate in community.
- **Party to the Polls:** This program celebrated the beginning of Early Voting in Maryland and showcased the on-campus voting location and ballot drop-box. This was a high-energy program for students to get excited about voting and reflect on their civic dreams.
- **Returns Watch Party:** This program invited the TU community to watch the Election 2022 results together and included an emotional wellness space.

In addition, the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility intentionally worked with University Marketing and Communications to craft campus messages about voter registration and the importance of participating in the political process to the entire TU community.



# Long-Term Goals and Action Steps

In 2023, the TU Votes Coalition will revisit the long-term goals listed in the 2022 Action Plan to update and improve them:

- A 90% registration rate and 60% turnout rate among eligible voters during the 2022 Midterm Election
- A 95% registration rate and 90% turnout rate among eligible student voters during the 2024 Presidential Election
- The establishment of Election Day as a campus holiday



**GET REGISTERED.**

**GET INFORMED.**

**GET INVOLVED.**

**VOTE.**

**GET STARTED AT [TOWSON.EDU/TUVOTES](https://TOWSON.EDU/TUVOTES)**

# COALITION

A major component that helped drive the TU Votes Initiative forward was its TU Votes Coalition. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility leads the work of this multi-departmental and dedicated group of student leaders, faculty, and staff. The following organizations, campus units, and student groups are represented on the Coalition:

- Andrew Goodman Ambassador
- Athletics
- BTU – Partnerships for Greater Baltimore
- Center for Student Diversity
- Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility
- Counseling Center
- Honors College
- Housing and Residence Life
- Military and Veterans Center
- New Student and Family Programs
- Office of the President
- Political Science
- Student Accountability and Restorative Practices
- Student Activities
- Student Success Programs
- Student organization leaders including:
  - Honors College Student Council
  - Student Government Association
  - TU Athletes Vote
  - University Residence Government
  - Young Democratic Socialists

The TU Votes Coalition met bi-weekly in the Fall 2022 semester. The Coalition discussed trends, opportunities, and challenges, and developed programs to meet the goals outlined in the 2022 Action Plan. Between Coalition meetings, members stayed in touch with one another, especially when more than one campus unit worked together on a program, or during major events such as National Voter Registration Day. The TU Votes Coalition's effectiveness is largely due to the prioritization of the efforts at every level of the institution, from student leaders to university administration.

The TU Votes Coalition will continue meeting regularly during the academic year to not only start preparing for the 2024 election season but to continue elevating opportunities for continued civic engagement between elections. 2023 will be crucial for reflecting on the past election cycle and creating approaches for collaboration on future programming and initiatives. After receiving the 2022 NSLVE reports for Towson University, the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility plans to focus on strategic coalition building throughout academic departments and co-curricular units.



In addition to TU Votes Coalition efforts, the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility developed a key partnership with University Marketing and Communications. Staff crafted and shared stories about voter engagement efforts that took place during the Fall 2022 semester, making meaningful connections between them and TU's strategic goals and mission. The partnership also led to a local news story, which provided another opportunity to highlight TU election efforts.

The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility created digital signage throughout campus as well as social media content to promote education and engagement among the university community.

Key external partners included the Andrew Goodman Foundation, the Baltimore County Board of Elections, and the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition. The Andrew Goodman Foundation, through its Vote Everywhere program, provided student leadership development and funding to support TU voter engagement efforts. The Students Learn Students Vote Coalition and its Ask Every Student Initiative offered helpful voter registration and engagement resources, which the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility shared widely across the campus. TU also worked closely with the Baltimore County Board of Elections to run an official polling location on campus. Student leaders were integral to the creation of the TU Votes Action Plan. They served as a source of guidance and provided feedback throughout the process. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility will continue to expand student leadership opportunities through the TU Votes Coalition.

## Voter Registration

Towson University provided TurboVote as an avenue for students to register to vote, verify their voter registration status, and receive relevant reminders and resources. In addition, the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility connected students to resources such as VOTE411.org, Power the Polls, and resources from the Andrew Goodman Foundation. By December 2022, *392 current TU students registered to vote using TurboVote.*

The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility promoted registration pathways and tools on its website, social media, and during programs to encourage students to register to vote, change their registration status, and request a mail-in ballot. Articles about TU's voter engagement efforts were featured in university-wide newsletters. In October, the College of Liberal Arts hosted a roundtable discussion on national midterm elections. The TU Votes team was able to set up a voter registration station at the reception of the event, providing an opportunity for attendees to register to vote, request their mail-in ballot, or ask any questions.

In September, Towson University was part of National Voter Registration Day, which included opportunities for in-person and virtual engagement. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility hosted “Be a Smart Cookie and Vote” and supported multiple student groups, including TU Athletes Vote, Student Achieve Goals through Education, and the Student Government Association, in sharing voter engagement resources at tabling events across campus. The TU Votes Coalition also leveraged social media to encourage students and their organizations to spread the word about registering to vote that day.



Voter engagement posters in prominent buildings on campus and through digital signage provided up-to-date information. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility shared voter engagement posters with Deans and asked them to distribute the posters to faculty in their colleges.

The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility looks forward to receiving TU’s 2022 NSLVE data to be able to learn about voter registration numbers.

## Voter Education

In collaboration with various campus units and student organizations, the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility hosted a series of events dedicated to educating voters. Programs included information about down-ballot voting, a screening of and reflection on the Maryland Gubernatorial Debate, and a post-election program to process the election outcomes.

Towson.edu/TUVotes continued to serve as the main voter education platform for the institution. The website provided up-to-date information about how to register and where and how to vote both in Maryland and out of state. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility worked closely with the Baltimore County and Maryland State Boards of Elections to ensure that the information was accurate. For out-of-state information, the website listed Democracy Works' Howto.vote as a resource.



The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility also worked with the League of Women Voters of Baltimore County to distribute VOTE411.org voter guides. The TU campus community could access the guides at campus-wide programs and in a variety of departmental offices across campus.

During Voter Education Week, the TU Votes Coalition shared resources at tabling events and through a social media campaign.

The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility partnered with faculty in Communication Studies to create a TU Votes Talks series. Students gave speeches focused on advocacy, voter engagement resources, and personal stories on Freedom Square, a central outdoor location on campus.







## Voter Turnout

On the first day of Early Voting, the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility collaborated with campus partners to host Party to the Polls. The program created excitement around voting and educated students about TU's on-campus polling site.

TU faculty in Computing and Information Science talked about election security in the fall issue of TU Magazine to promote the importance of continued efforts to secure voter information and ballots.

The Student Government Association in partnership with the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility hosted an Elections Watch Party for TU students, staff, and faculty to be in community while listening to election results.

TU students and staff volunteered roughly 130 hours to assist voters in accessing the campus polling site.

## Student Voting Rights

Towson University worked with the Baltimore County Board of Elections to serve as an in-person polling location during Early Voting and on Election Day, and to install a ballot drop box. This ballot drop box was available for any voter in the area with a Maryland mail-in ballot.

TU's Academic Senate resolved to encourage members of the TU community to be flexible with students regarding due dates on Election Day, avoid major assignments, exams, presentations, etc. on that day, and/or orient part or all class material, discussion towards topics related to voting or democracy.

Through the Student Government Association, members passed a bill which advocated for Towson University to declare Election Day a holiday. Though it did not pass on a university level, advocacy by students and community members continues.

During and before Early Voting and Election Day, members of the TU Votes Coalition were available for questions, including connecting students to the Board of Elections directly, to help address student needs.

Towson University's NSLVE results will help the TU Votes Coalition determine the extent to which the institution was able to reach full voter participation in 2022.

## Institutionalization of Voter Engagement Efforts

The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility is taking the lead in institutionalizing voter engagement efforts. The TU Votes Coalition, comprised of students, staff, and faculty representatives from across the university, is one important component of this institutionalization. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staff turnover in the department, the TU Votes Coalition needed to be revitalized. In the Fall of 2022, Coalition members were crucial in connecting with students in their respective networks. To ensure consistent emphasis on voter engagement efforts, the TU Votes Coalition is going to continue its work not only during semesters in which elections take place but also in-between elections.



The development of a communications plan was another successful strategy. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility established an intentional partnership with University Marketing and Communications to craft campus-wide messages at crucial times in the election cycle (e.g., National Voter Registration Day, Early Voting, etc.). Messages spoke to TU's culture of civic engagement and provided election resources. Several messages were sent on behalf of the President and Vice President of Student Affairs. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility will continue to foster this partnership.



The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility also partnered with several faculty members to integrate voter engagement into the classroom. Several faculty members assigned individual or group projects and infused conversations around the upcoming election in their classes. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility sees opportunities to build on partnerships with faculty and will focus on this effort in future election cycles.

## On-Campus Polling Site

Towson University again served as the site for an official polling location for Early Voting and on Election Day. The polling site also included a ballot drop box. The South Campus Pavilion safely hosted over 5,200 in-person voters during the 2022 Midterm Election cycle. Additionally, over 1,300 voters cast their mail-in ballots at the polling location's drop box. TU students, faculty, and staff volunteered roughly 130 hours to assist voters on campus.



TU Votes Coalition members, as well as campus units including Events and Conference Services, University Marketing and Communications, and the Office of the President have played a major role in ensuring the success of TU's voter engagement efforts.

# BARRIERS

## Engaging Students Consistently

The TU Votes Coalition expanded its voter engagement programs to offer students a variety of different opportunities to engage at multiple moments in the election cycle (e.g., National Voter Registration Day, Early Voting, Maryland Gubernatorial Debate, Election Day). Many of these programs were new, and drawing students to them worked well at times, but not always. Some programs had high attendance (e.g., more than 150 students participated in Party to the Polls), while others were not well attended (e.g., no one attended the Gubernatorial Debate Reflection). While students did not attend the debate reflection, students engaged in lively conversations about the debate during the Debate Watch Party. The interaction between students suggests that they are interested in reflection. The TU Votes Coalition will review data from 2022 Midterm Election programs to adjust those with low attendance while ensuring that important content gets integrated into programs that had a higher attendance.

## Staff Turnover

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many students, staff, and faculty who supported TU's voter engagement have left the institution. None of the five full-time staff members and four graduate assistants in the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility worked at TU prior to the pandemic. Many other members of the TU Votes Coalition are new to the institution or have seen significant staff turnover in their own departments and organizations. Due to the turnover, institutional memory was lost, and relationships had to be established anew, which constrained the work of the Coalition.



# BEYOND 2022

Towson University's 2020-30 Strategic Plan: Leadership for the Public Good emphasizes the commitment of the institution to civic learning and democratic engagement. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility will gather the TU Votes Coalition on a regular basis to offer in-between election opportunities for the campus community and to prepare for Election 2024. This ongoing opportunity to reflect on current events and create civic engagement programming together will advance TU as a civically focused community. In addition to the work of the TU Votes Coalition, the Student Government Association, in collaboration with campus partners, will host its annual Tiger Pride Day. This program provides an opportunity for students to network with state legislators and advocate for legislative issues.



## #DEMOCRACYIS

In recognition of International Day of Democracy, we invite you to join us in a social media campaign to highlight the importance of democracy, especially given this perilous moment in the United States and around the globe.



In addition, the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility is developing several programs for TU students:

- The **Civic Renewal Fellows** program will support students in developing the tools to create empowering spaces for individual and collective reflection on current events, personal storytelling, and civic imagination.
- The **Civic Transformation Living Learning Community** will foster meaningful connections among Towson University (TU) students, staff, and faculty who are passionate about actively participating in civic life and co-creating just and equitable communities. The LLC will explore social justice issues through the lens of public policy, civic engagement, and community-based learning. Students learn about the intersection of community engagement, civic engagement, equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice.
- The **Social Action Collaboratory** will connect students with local organizations and civic and community leaders. Students will focus on social justice topics and explore how local communities and civic leaders are engaging with that topic.

The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility will continue its intentional partnership development with student organizations, faculty, and staff to encourage them to continue to stay involved with public issues that matter to them.

## Voting, Registration and Yield Rates

### YOUR INSTITUTION

40.9%

2018 Voting Rate

+21.0

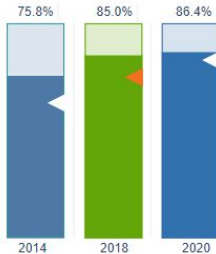
Change From 2014

### ALL INSTITUTIONS

39.1%

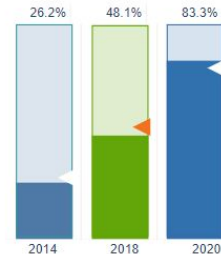
2018 Voting Rate

### REGISTRATION RATE



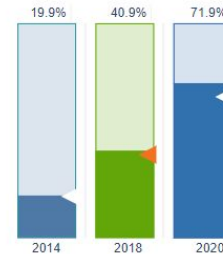
The **Registration Rate** is the percent of your voting-eligible students who registered to vote.

### VOTING RATE OF REGISTERED STUDENTS



The **Voting Rate of Registered Students** is the percent of registered students who voted on Election Day. We often refer to this as the “yield” rate.

### VOTING RATE



The **Voting Rate** is the percentage of eligible students who voted on Election Day. The voting rate is also the product of the registration and yield rates.

Towson University renewed its participation in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) through 2033. The NSLVE campus report will continue to be an important resource to learn about the impact of TU’s voter engagement efforts. The Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility will continue to use campus reports to inform TU Votes Coalition goals for future elections.

The Voter Friendly Campus Report was compiled in January 2023 by the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility staff based on meetings, feedback, and contributions from several members of the TU Votes Coalition and other campus partners.

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