



Toolkit for Faculty and Leadership


As teaching staff and faculty at Harvard, you influence students, staff, and your fellow faculty. Together, we can shift our campus to achieve 100% voter engagement. When discussing voting with students, use the clause “if eligible” to include international and undocumented populations, and encourage students to mobilize their peers.


Promotion


 **Key Voting Dates:** Add key voting dates to your course syllabus and make in-person and email announcements on these days. Give students five minutes to check their voter registration and make a plan to vote.

Tuesday, 9/17 National Voter Registration Day
Tuesday, 11/5 Election Day


 **Canvas:** Create a separate tab for Voting Engagement. See appendix for sample language.

 **Email Signature:** Add a line to the bottom of your email signature sharing why you vote or encouraging others to engage in voting. Link to: voteschallenge.harvard.edu


 **Election Day:** Avoid major assignments and tests on Election Day (11/5). Allow excused absences.


 **Promotion:** Display non-partisan voting collateral in your office or on your website.


Curricular Integration


 Democracy and voting can be woven into **lectures and assignments** of any subject: computer science problem sets, film class, scientific analyses of public funding, and education policy. Discuss key tenants of democracy such as media literacy and participation.

Engaging Your Students


 **Poll Workers:** Allow excused absences for students to be Election Day poll workers or provide extra credit for poll working / joining the Harvard Votes Challenge (HVC) team.

 **Invite:** HVC Organizers can attend your class to discuss voting importance and resources.

 **Connect:** Invite students to join the HVC team.

 **Challenge:** If you teach multiple sections of the same course, have different sections compete against each other in a voter engagement competition.

Engage Your Peers

 Mobilize **three** faculty members to join you in promoting voter engagement.

 Host a **departmental event** focused on voting

Appendix for Faculty

What is the Harvard Votes Challenge?

The Harvard Votes Challenge (HVC) is a University-wide, nonpartisan initiative working toward 100% voter registration, engagement, and turnout across all of Harvard's degree-granting schools and beyond. Created by students, administrators, and faculty members in 2018, the Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics and the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation now oversee the initiative. We build a culture of participation through a diverse coalition, institutionalization of voter readiness, and creative organizing.

Voting at Harvard

- Harvard University prides itself on civic leadership, but historically, voter registration and participation has been low. Fortunately, our culture is changing. In recent U.S. elections, Harvard student voter turnout increased from 22.4% in 2014 to 48.6% in 2018 and exceeded 70% in 2020. For 2024, we are hoping to hit 90% engagement. Participation translates education into action. Voting as a student is a proven pipeline into lifelong civic commitment and engagement.
- Voter engagement is nonpartisan. Per the Higher Education Act of 1965, universities must do their best to provide voter information to students.
- Voting is often seen as an extracurricular student activity; our goal is to make participation an institutional priority in which everyone has a role.
- Students can either vote in person, using their Cambridge/Boston address, or by mail (absentee), using their home address. Since more than half of students University-wide vote absentee, they encounter various barriers, including moving deadlines, stamps, and complex processes, which make voting difficult. Our goal is to build a culture of engagement while mitigating these barriers to push forward participation. Becoming voter-ready as early as possible is critical.
- Elections at all levels are incredibly important. Encourage students to research all candidates and elected offices.
- Our campus has many undocumented and ineligible students. Elections and how we vote affect these populations. In language discussing elections, use the terminology "if eligible," emphasize that anyone can organize, and point people to a variety of civic resources.

Email Signature Samples

If you want to include a note about the Harvard Votes Challenge in your signature, below is some language that you can use. Be sure to include a link to voteschallenge.harvard.edu.

- Be a voter.
- 2024 is here. Vote with me!
- Want to engage voters with me?
- Are you ready for November 5? Register to vote.
- I vote because:
- Register. Request. Vote.
- Don't just talk about change. Vote.
- Education is preparing you to vote.

Language for Election Day

Election Day: Tuesday, 11/5

Today is Election Day! When are you voting? Find your Massachusetts polling location here:

www.sec.state.ma.us/voterregistrationsearch/myvoterregstatus.aspx

If you are not eligible to vote in U.S. elections, mobilize three friends to vote. Elections affect all of us.

Canvas Integration

Feel free to customize the text below with how voting is important to your course subject.

As a student in this class, we expect you to apply your studies to real-world action. One critical way to act is through full voter participation. Research your elections, make a plan to vote, and encourage your community to turn out.

Remember to register to vote.

Turn out on Election Day on 11/5.

Registration Deadlines and Absentee Ballot Deadlines Vary by State, for more information on your state's deadlines, visit vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines/ and vote.org/absentee-ballot-deadlines/

For help navigating the process, visit voteschallenge.harvard.edu/voting. If you are not eligible to vote in U.S. elections, mobilize three friends to vote. Elections affect all of us.

Poll Working Information

Direct student and peers here: voteschallenge.harvard.edu/become-poll-worker

Curricular and Event Ideas

- Life Sciences: Hold a facilitated discussion on climate and energy. Train students on how to communicate their research findings with elected officials.
- Social Sciences: Design an ethnography of nonvoters.
- Computer Science: Design and implement solutions to mail-in voting systems.
- Statistics: Assign a problem set that analyzes voting power across different municipalities or states.
- Health: Hypothesize the future of health care based on voting behavior.
- Design: Redesign the voting booth or the voter registration form.
- History and Law: Discuss voting enfranchisement over time.

Departmental Events

- Invite local elected officials to speak about your academic subject's relationship to public leadership.
- Hold a "Why I Vote" event.
- Integrate a voter engagement table into a preexisting gathering.

Additional Reading

- Teaching Civic Engagement Across Disciplines:
<http://web.apsanet.org/teachingcivicengagement>