



University
of Houston
Clear Lake

Voter Friendly Campus Designation

2022-2023 End of Year Report

University of Houston – Clear Lake
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End-of-Year Report

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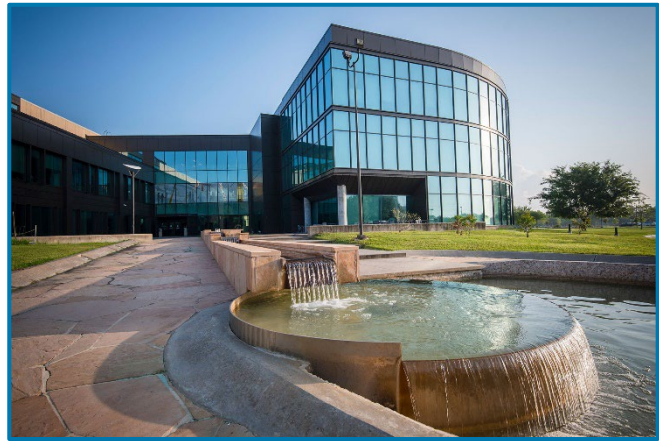
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The University Profile

The University of Houston – Clear Lake was founded in 1974 as an upper-level institution part of the University of Houston System. In 2014, the university expanded to welcome freshman and sophomore students to the campus. The institution began with 1,069 students and 60 faculty and has since grown to include over 6,758 undergraduate and 2,386 graduate students. In its short history, UH – Clear Lake has earned a distinctive reputation as a student-centered, community-minded, and partnership-oriented university with



strong connections to area businesses, organizations, schools and individuals that enhance the regions educational, economic, cultural, scientific, engineering and professional environment.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching selected UHCL as one of 119 U.S. colleges and universities for its 2008 Community Engagement Classification. UHCL is also a five-time recipient of the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, the highest federal recognition a college or university can receive for its commitment to volunteering, service-learning and civic engagement. Under the leadership of President Richard Walker, who was named President in August 2022, UHCL has continued to display a commitment to civic engagement and service through its Impact 2025 and Beyond strategic plan, recognizing community engagement as a pillar of the university’s growth and central to the formation of well-rounded Hawks.

UHCL is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) with almost 40% of students identifying as Hispanic and students of colors making up 65% of the student population. UHCL opened its first residence hall, Hunter Hall, in 2019 and remains a primarily commuter campus. About half of the student population are Harris County residents.

The Coalition

To execute the Campus Plan, the UHCL Voter Friendly Campus Coalition (VFCC) was assembled in the summer of 2020. It included a small group of staff representing Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Student Housing and Residential Life, and Student Involvement and Leadership. The VFCC also included one faculty member and a student representative who served as a Democracy Fellow with the Campus Vote Project.



As it currently stands, the Coalition features a mix of faculty, staff, students, and community partners representing two staff members from the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership, two faculty members from the College of Human Sciences and Humanities, two staff members from the Campus Vote Project, and two Harris County Voter Registrars. Student representation includes the UHCL Student Government President and Vice-President, two Democracy Fellows with the Campus Vote Project, and 1 student leader from the Young Democrats student organization on campus.

Coalition Effectiveness

In the summer of 2022, our Coordinator of Community Engagement who oversaw the Coalition and Civic Engagement programming at UHCL left the position; leaving the Assistant Director of Student Involvement and Leadership to carry forward.

The Coalition has since met three times in the fall semester with an emphasis on teamwork. Previously, the primary goals and objectives of the campus plan were maintained and achieved through the Coordinator of Community Engagement solely accomplishing them. With new leadership, the Coalition has since worked on projects such as penning a letter to administration encouraging continued support of civic engagement initiatives as well as recognizing and celebrating our institution's successes.

Continued Evolution of the Coalition

The Civic Engagement Coalition serves as the advisory board for the development of civic and voter engagement strategy at UHCL. While the Coalition does meet monthly and often discusses ways in which UHCL can facilitate programming on campus to reach our goals; a push toward a more active membership of coalition members who are actively engaged in the work we are doing is becoming an expectation. With a re-imagining of the coalition, opportunities for members to take leadership roles in different initiatives will be introduced with succession planning incorporated if there is turnover with the leadership of the coalition.

Community Partners

The OSIL team worked collaboratively with organizations, offices, and departments across the institution to achieve various components of the campus plan. These partners include:

- Campus Vote Project (CVP): UHCL worked closely with the Campus Vote Project to share training and non-partisan resources to students. The CVP also provided funding for a Democracy Fellow and hosted programs that were at no cost for our students. We used CVP standards to craft our programs intentionally around specific learning objectives.



- College of Human Sciences and Humanities Departments: The UHCL Humanities departments collaborated with the OSIL team to connect with students to promote voter education events and turnout.
- Parking and Transportation Services: The Parking and Transportation Services provided set parking spaces for those voting and attending events.
- MTV Vote Early Challenge: The OSIL team and the democracy fellows collaborated with MTV to produce a Vote Early Day event for the community. MTV provided supplies, shirts, and food for the event.
- MOVE Texas: The OSIL team worked with MOVE Texas on spreading voter education to the students of UHCL. MOVE Texas provided flyers and other supplies to encourage voter turnout. .
- Facilities Management and Construction and Custodial Services: The Facilities Management and Construction and Custodial Services teams organized spaces, setup furniture, cleaned, and sanitized to make all events and opportunities possible for students and community members at UHCL.
- Harris County, State of Texas: The OSIL team worked with Harris County to have full-time staff and students trained as deputy voter registrars. UHCL also served as a host for a Harris County polling site for both early voting and Election Day voting in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election.
- Marketing Communications: Institutional, divisional, and office communications teams worked in tandem to execute large campus-wide marketing campaigns for voter education, registration, and turnout.
- Scheduling Department: The Scheduling Department facilitated the reservation and use of campus spaces for various events, particularly serving as a polling site for early voting in the Harris County 2020 General Election.
- Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion office was a key partner in many programs, especially the National Voter Registration Week.
- Student Housing and Residential Life: OSIL worked to target residents on campus in collaboration with Student Housing and Residential Life (SHRL).
- Student Organizations: Multiple students organizations hosted events and activities in collaboration with the OSIL. Student organizations also provided space for the Democracy Fellow and staff to share about ongoing civic initiatives and keep students informed on voting rights and procedures.

Student Involvement

Currently, two Democracy Fellows funded through the Campus Vote Project serve on the Civic Engagement Coalition and help drive initiatives and programming towards the implementation of our campus plan; serving as co-facilitators for the plan's development through events and initiatives on

campus. The two fellows provide insight into the student experience to our Coalition and department. The Democracy Fellows also attend major campus events, hosting booths to drive civic participation and engagement.

The President of the Clear Lake Young Democrats, a student at UH-Clear Lake also serves actively on the Civic Engagement Coalition as well as both the Student Government President and Vice-President for Outreach. These students have contributed to our plan through their engagement with students—serving as ambassadors and peer-educators for civic education on our campus; providing perspectives of all students at our institution.

Moving forward, we hope to increase the number of students on our Coalition by engaging faculty and staff to nominate students who may be of interest in civic education and engagement. Through this strategic effort, we hope to gain a diverse array of student voices (residential, commuter, full-time, part-time, etc.)

Overview of Goals and Accomplishments

The campus plan established in 2022 had three short-term and three long-term goals. In this section, each goal is described and analyzed with consideration to their execution at UHCL.

Short-Term Goals

Goal 1: By December 2022, UHCL will increase the number of student led civic and voter engagement initiatives to two programs per month. Most civic and voter engagement initiatives at this time are department-sponsored and staff-organized.

Goal Achieved

The coalition and OSIL in conjunction with various campus partners established multiple events and programs to promote civic education on campus. Each month, UHCL hosted events in multiple formats to inform students on the voting process and provide space for students to become more civic-conscious leaders:



- Constitution Day: The OSIL team and Democracy Fellows collaborated to provided education opportunities through workshops on voter registration and the importance of voting. They held trivia over the Bill of Rights and a panel over controversial decisions made by the supreme court.
- Early Voting Polling Site: UHCL worked with Harris County to set designate on campus building as an early voting site for Harris County student and community residents.

- Election Day Polling Site: UHCL worked with Harris County to host Election Day voting for Harris County student and community residents.
- Vote Early Day Celebration: The Vote Early Day Celebration event included t-shirts, games, and education initiatives for the university community.
- Voter Trivia: This event engaged students before and after the election to promote awareness of voting statistics, facts, and procedures, through trivia games with giveaways for students.
- Voter Education Workshop: The Voter education Workshop was an interactive event engaging students in discussion about how to vote, from registration to the ballot box.
- Polling Location Tabling Event: During this event, the Democracy Fellows passed out flyers, educated students on polling locations, and provided them which a chance to test their knowledge with a Trivia game

Goal 2: By December 2022, UHCL will increase and sustain active membership of the Civic Engagement Coalition by 50%. Emphasis will be placed on recruiting members from student affairs departments, local civic and voter engagement organizations, and civic educators from peer institutions.

Goal Achieved

UHCL was able to increase and sustain active membership of the Civic Engagement Coalition. Through engaging meetings and action-oriented civic engagement initiatives; the coalition actively participated. With turnover in the Division of Student Affairs (including our Coordinator for Community Engagement who typically oversees the plan), an emphasis was placed on sustaining membership and fully engaging members to make a difference on the Coalition. Moving forward, we will continue to work on sustaining the members and creating opportunities for active participation.

Goal 3: By December 2022, UHCL will establish and execute a Voting 101 educational initiative. This will be an intentional workshop, posters, and marketing campaign that emphasizes voter education and turnout, particularly for specific marginalized and underrepresented groups per the NSLVE.



Goal Achieved

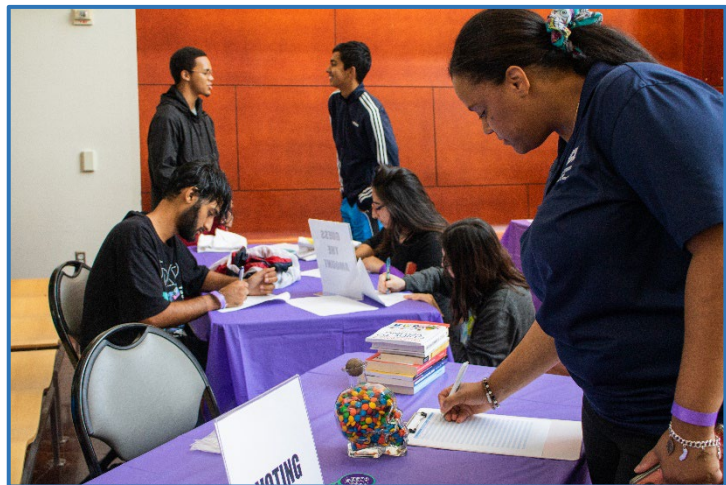
Expanding on the Voter Education Workshop under the first goal, OSIL focused on voter education to provide the necessary knowledge for students to feel safe when voting. This presentation covered the history of voting by discussing multiple laws and amendments passed to restrict or expand the voting rights of diverse groups. It goes through where and how to register, along with the required documents needed when voting. It highlights the statistical differences in voter turnout between age groups and types of elections. It provided the students with a safe location to learn the basics of voting and to ask questions they may have.

Long-Term Goals

Goal 1: By 2028, UHCL will increase its student registration rate from 81.1% to 90%.

Goal in Progress

The OSIL team is working in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to re-submit our participation form for the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement. Once this is approved by our President, we will look at the data and make intentional data-driven program decisions.



We have a close partnership with the League of Women Voters, MOVE Texas Organization, as well as the Harris County Voter Registration team in which during voter registration periods, both groups have access to tables on our campus to register students to vote.

Goal 2: By 2028, UHCL will increase its student voting rate from 62.8% to 70%.

Goal in Progress

This goal is still ongoing as the OSIL team awaits the voting rate from the November 2022 elections and the opportunity to compare it to previous elections. We currently do not have data on the percentage of voter participation at UHCL. Once we have the data, we plan to utilize it to make intentional decisions on how we can continue to increase our voting rate.

Goal 3: By 2028, UHCL will be an established and consistent early voting polling site for Harris County. In 2020, 85% of UHCL students voted early.

Goal in Progress

This goal is still ongoing as the Civic Engagement Coalition works to advocate and bring awareness to the importance of early voting on college campuses. The Coalition put together a letter to the UHCL administration asking for support of Administration to

continue to offer space for early voting and the President of the University agreed that this is a priority.

Currently, our Parking and Transportation department is working on a plan to address the parking issue that we have had on our campus as it relates to voters. This plan will go through the University's shared governance process for approval to put into formal writing that the University will cease ticketing to voters during voting periods.

Analysis

To achieve success for a well-rounded democratic engagement plan there are four pillars that must be taken into consideration. Those pillars, as mentioned below, were all achieved through a diverse array of programming and initiatives.

Pillar 1: Voter Registration

A top priority at UHCL as part of our plan is voter registration. The OSIL staff and student volunteers are trained as Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrars for Harris County, as well as some of the surrounding counties that our students live in such as Montgomery, Brazoria, and Galveston. While continuing to offer this service to students, we also welcomed partnerships with the Harris County Voter Registration department as well as the League of Women Voters and the MOVE Texas Organization. While numbers were not reported for the League of Women Voters or the MOVE Texas Organization, Harris County reported that they registered a little over 300 students since their start on campus in July 2022. During our semesterly large-scale events such as the Student Involvement Expo and Weeks of Welcome, these groups were able to table and target different counties to register students to vote.

With consideration to the fact that UHCL has only recently transformed to enroll freshmen students and that civic engagement programming is at its forming stages, the OSIL team had little research and understanding of student civic engagement on campus. Throughout this process, UHCL came to recognize that a vast majority of students were in fact interested in registering to vote, but simply did not know how, nor did they have the resources or time to dedicate. Hawks were willing to commit to the democratic process when provided the steppingstones to achieve participation. We learned that our international student community represented a wide array of countries whose democratic processes we were not aware of. Finally, since our office had limited first-hand experience in voter education and registration programs, we began to recognize the nuances of voter engagement including where students can vote, and the challenges students faced to register and participate.

Pillar 2: Voter Education

This year, the OSIL team worked collaboratively with staff, faculty, alumni, and student peer educators to develop events and initiatives that educated our students on the importance of voting and the process. Through programs such as our Civic Leadership Series, we invited faculty, staff, and an alumnus in to talk about civic issues that our country was going through to educate students on the importance of turning out to vote. These workshops gave students space to engage in meaningful dialogue about important issues in local, state, and federal elections and encouraged exploration of personal identities and values as it relates to political participation. Our student peer educators also

created and hosted general voter education workshops, explaining the steps to vote while also creating bulletin boards around campus to engage students in the democratic process.

Through our voter education initiatives, we recognized that students were receptive to interactive engagement programs, including ones they could participate in themselves. We also learned that while students were excited about voting and the democratic engagement process, they were overwhelmed by the influx of information related to voting and needed a streamlined information source to gain knowledge on voting issues and processes.

Pillar 3: Voter Turnout

UHCL was successful in engaging students in a culture of voting on campus. Through support from the MTV Vote Early program, the campus hosted its very first Vote Early Day event. This event saw students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community members come together to celebrate voting early. The designation of UHCL as an early voting site as well as Election Day polling location greatly impacted our student experience and turnout for our students. We did not track how many UHCL students voted at UHCL, we were recognized as the only college campus in Harris County that saw an increase in voters. We attracted over 7,051 early voters and 741 voters on Election Day. Our efforts in voter turnout led us to recognize the various challenges our students and community citizens face in accessing voting sites. It also led us to navigate challenges between the institution and county to provide a safe and efficient polling location amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Pillar 4: Student Voting Rights

Student voting rights and recognizing students are advocates for change is central to the learner-centered approach of UHCL. Through our voter education programs and communicating with students in advance of the election, we made sure to provide students with resources and information about their voting experience. This included hotlines for voter rights advocates and ensuring students were prepared well in advance to cast their vote. For students residing in Harris County, we encouraged on-campus voting and for students in other counties, we provided support in helping them identify their nearest polling site and addressing transportation needs to get there. While our team did not seek to establish a peer-based voting rights advocate program, we are eager to collaborate with students to incorporate this into a develop a civic leadership program. We learned that students were not aware of the various rights they had as voters.



There are several hurdles and successes that student voters face at UHCL. Since UHCL is a primarily commuter campus, approximately 50% of the student population live outside of Harris County. As a result, it can sometimes be difficult for the campus to serve as a “one stop shop” for all their voting

needs. While UHCL is evolving, and the growth of office and student affairs staff is increasing, there is a persistent low student engagement rate, though it is slowly increasing post-pandemic. Additionally, in our efforts to create an inclusive community, we have ineffectively provided democratic engagement for our international student population. In terms of voting successes, students celebrate the creation of dedicated staff support to provide for community and civic engagement programs on campus. The UHCL's campus is also easy to navigate and makes participation in the civic process, particularly voting an easy feat.

Successes

The university community celebrated several accomplishments in the democratic engagement process of 2022. Our top three success for civic engagement were:

1. **#1 College Campus Voting Location in Harris County:** UHCL was designated the number one college campus voting location in Harris County—beating out the University of Houston, University of Houston-Downtown, and Texas Southern University for the distinction.
2. **Community Participation at Early Voting:** UHCL welcomed over 7,000 voters to campus during the early voting period of the 2022 Primary Election. Serving as a community resource, the University was very proud to buck the trend.
3. **Partnering with MTV for a Successful Vote Early Day 2022 Program:** The University received grant funding to host Vote Early Day 2022 on our campus. The event was a huge success garnering over 125 students and community members.

We were able to assess our program and services through various methods. Utilizing our campus engagement platform, UHCL GetInvolved (Anthology Engage), we were able to track attendance at each of our events and give students credit for various institutional guided pathways to entice students to attend civic events.

Program evaluations through the Qualtrics platform were administered to assess student learning outcomes that tied directly to our universities strategic plan. The Student Involvement and Leadership department also tied in a student learning outcome that is being assessed through all civic engagement events, “students will participate in the democratic process and reflect on their personal and civic values, as well as recognizing the impact of foundational democratic documents and diverse cultures, histories, values and movements on the global society.”

On the institutional level, the success of civic engagement efforts was recognized by senior administrators including both Interim-Assistant Vice Presidents of Student Engagement, Interim-Vice President of Student Affairs, and the President of the University. The initiatives and programs in the campus plan receive broad support as it ties directly in the University's strategic plan. As we onboard a Coordinator and move the Coalition into a more actively engaged group—we hope to share future successes in the execution of the campus plan with stakeholders through open meetings. Currently, successes are highlighted via the University's Marketing and Communications team.

Barriers

UHCL successfully achieved the three short-term goals for the 2021-22 Campus Plan. We hosted multiple events and initiatives focused on civic education and registration monthly throughout the

campus plan's cycle. Additionally, we made progress in achieving our long-term goals, including the NSLVE Report and establishing a protocol to assess student voter engagement. However, the institution also faced multiple barriers in achieving its goals.

Campus Climate and Institutional Barriers

There were three primary barriers UHCL faced in implementing the campus plan:

1. **Student Engagement:** Since UHCL is a largely commuter campus, student involvement in campus programs and traditions is low with most students coming to campus solely for class. While we have made efforts to increase student engagement post-pandemic, the increase has been slow.
2. **Loss of Staff:** The attrition of the Coordinator for Community Engagement in the campus plan's home office, the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership, resulted in reassigning duties and responsibilities to fulfill the campus plan and all other traditional office programs.
3. **Parking on Campus:** With new leadership, parking on campus for free during voting became an issue. Many voters received citations from the parking department that were later voided as Administration became involved. To remove this barrier, the Parking and Transportation Department is currently working on a plan for Voter Parking that will be submitted to the University's shared governance committee for approval.

As we go into 2023, UHCL aspires to define roles and establish processes that continue the learner-centered tradition in civic learning. We look forward to engaging with on-campus and off-campus partners that will share fiscal, administrative, and human resource responsibilities in the execution of civic engagement initiatives. We recognize that by involving the contributions of multiple groups, we can provide an innovative and more well-rounded culture of civic duty on campus.

Beyond 2022

As we begin a new chapter in American history, UHCL is excited to nurture existing programs and services, while simultaneously creating new initiatives that will continue to foster year-round civic consciousness with our Hawks. In early 2023, we look to bring on a new Coordinator for Community Engagement that will lead our civic engagement area; serving as the chair of the Civic Engagement Coalition and supervisor of our two Democracy Fellows and our Civic Engagement Student Associate. UHCL will develop strategic partnerships across local, state, and regional organizations and leaders to better support student success. We will continue to host monthly programs that push civic education forward at UHCL, and intentionally weave civic



education into campus traditional events. We will strategically unite experiential learning and civic education programs to encourage activism in multiple civic and political spaces. We will engage in critical dialogue with all stakeholders of the campus community and conduct formative assessment to provide students with high-impact learning opportunities consistent with their needs.

NSLVE Data

Members of the coalition analyzed the NSLVE data and had discussions regarding the data. With turnover in the Coordinator of Community Engagement role and the position currently being vacant; utilizing the NSLVE Data beyond sharing with stakeholders via University communications and annual reporting did not occur.

Moving forward once the position is filled, it is our hope that the NSVE data can be broken done alongside Institutional Researchers and University administrators to interpret and extract meaningful and consequential outcomes. Demographic information will be instrumental in supporting the growth of students in specific student organizations, academic fields, and drawing out the needs of the various identity groups represented on campus.