

**To:** The University Senate  
**From:** Purdue Student Government  
**Subject:** Academic Calendar Revision: Election Day as a Civic Day of Service  
**Disposition:** University Senate for Discussion and Adoption  
**Rationale:** Purdue continues to have a voting rate that is lower than the national average: a **36.9%** voting rate compared to the national rate of 46.9% in 2012, a **9.4%** rate versus a national rate of 19.7% in 2014, a **47.9%** rate versus a national rate of 51.4% in 2016, and a voting rate of **31.2%** compared to the national rate of 39.1% in the 2018 election. By signing the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge pledge, Purdue committed to ensuring all eligible students would be able to register to vote and cast informed ballots in the 2020 general election and beyond, while also making a commitment to foster a campus culture that supports nonpartisan student civic learning, political engagement, and student voter participation. Purdue has endorsed the efforts of the Indiana Civic Health Alliance to promote civic engagement and increase voter turnout in Indiana, and President Daniels has prioritized civic engagement.

Purdue students have extremely high demands on their time and energy, and giving them time off to vote would allow them to prioritize civic engagement. Studies have shown that scheduling conflicts are the most significant barrier to voting for college students and employees (1). Participation is a habit, and the literature shows that “voting in one election substantially increases the likelihood of voting in the future” (2). As a University that recently committed to creating a civic literacy graduation requirement, giving students the day off to vote encourages civic engagement and adheres to the lessons and values that students are expected to have when they graduate. Recent polls show that strong majorities of both Democrats and Republicans favor some kind of Election Day holiday (3) — and widespread adoption, with the University of Oklahoma (4), Columbia (and Columbia Law School) (5), Brown (6), the NCAA (7), Northwestern Law School, over 500 companies (8), and upwards of a dozen states recognizing Election Day as a holiday or civic day of service. Thus, recognizing Election Day as a non-instructional day in future academic calendars would be advantageous in order to encourage civic service among the entire Purdue community.

**Proposal:**

Purdue University Administration and Faculty Senate acknowledge the importance of election participation and the need for civic engagement in the Purdue community. Purdue University Administration and Faculty Senate recommend designating general election days as a non-instructional Days of Civic Service within all future academic calendars. While participation in primary and special elections are also an important means of civic engagement, the timing of these elections poses scheduling difficulties. Thus, these bodies would encourage instructional flexibility during these elections but do not recommend designation as non-instructional Days of Civic Service.

**Sources:**

1. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/want-americans-to-vote-give-them-the-day-off/2018/10/10/5bde4b1a-ccae-11e8-920f-dd52e1ae4570\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/want-americans-to-vote-give-them-the-day-off/2018/10/10/5bde4b1a-ccae-11e8-920f-dd52e1ae4570_story.html)
2. <https://isps.yale.edu/research/publications/isps03-004>
3. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/11/06/weekday-elections-set-the-u-s-apart-from-many-other-advanced-democracies/>
4. [https://www.normantranscript.com/news/ou-to-designate-election-day-as-fall-2020-holiday/article\\_e72dba60-e3d7-11ea-b741-a3c2f67a1127.html](https://www.normantranscript.com/news/ou-to-designate-election-day-as-fall-2020-holiday/article_e72dba60-e3d7-11ea-b741-a3c2f67a1127.html)
5. <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/2004/11/04/wait-why-do-we-get-two-days-election-day/>
6. <https://www.brown.edu/news/2020-09-09/election>
7. [https://www.espn.com/college-sports/story/\\_/id/29303499/ncaa-encourages-schools-give-athletes-election-day-off](https://www.espn.com/college-sports/story/_/id/29303499/ncaa-encourages-schools-give-athletes-election-day-off)
8. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/18/business/election-day-2020-day-off/index.html>