Voting as a Civic Practice: A look at 2012 & 2014 Baylor NSLVE Data
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Study Overview
As part of the NASPA Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement Lead Cohort, Baylor had the opportunity to join the National Study of Learning, Voting, & Engagement (NSLVE) in 2016. NSLVE is the first and only study to objectively examine student and institution-level data on student registration & voting and to share these data with participating campuses.

Voting is by no means the only indicator of civic engagement, but it is fundamental. Studying the voting rates of students provides an important measure that can catalyze improvements in academic programs and co-curricular experiences (NSLVE, 2017).

This poster shares 2012 & 2014 data. 2016 election data is forthcoming and should be available by fall 2017.

Methods
From NSLVE website:
“We formed a partnership with the National Student Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse), a nonprofit organization established by the higher education community to provide educational reporting, verification, and research. Over 95% of U.S. colleges and universities send enrollment records to the Clearinghouse. Your institution probably does, too.”

“The Clearinghouse matches student enrollment records with publicly available voter registration and turnout records compiled by a data services company called Catalist. NOTE: the publicly available records only indicate whether a person registered to vote and voted (not how they voted). The Clearinghouse removes all student personally identifiable information, and sends NSLVE de-identified data. NSLVE never learns the names of your students, or who they voted for.”

- No student surveys!
- Accurate & confidential data
- Only aggregate data shared

Results
Snapshots of 2012 & 2014 data, Baylor Institutional Report

Overall Voter Registration & Voting Rates

- 2012 Voting Rate: 33%
- 2014 Voting Rate: 8%

By Major

By Race/Ethnicity

By Gender

Discussion
Key Findings & Recommendations

- Voting rates are significantly lower than peer institutions.
- There are pockets of highly engaged students on campus and less engaged students. We can use this information to strengthen & support engaged students and to boost outreach to less engaged populations.
- Under Higher Education Act, institutions are required to make a good faith effort to distribute voter registration forms.

Recommendations

- Convene a working group focused on civic engagement.
- Connect voting as a civic practice to ongoing civic engagement initiatives, i.e. Public Deliberation Initiative, This Matter series, and other co-curricular and curricular programming.
- Strengthen support for student-led voter registration drives. Continue to build campus & community partnerships that support student voting.
- Register for All In Democracy Challenge to connect with best practices and tips for increasing voter learning & engagement.

References

- NSLVE. Institute for Democracy in Higher Education (IDHE). Tufts University.
- All In Democracy Challenge - http://www.allinchallenge.org/.