



# Overview of Penn Leads the Vote Activities and Impact: Fall 2020 Election

## Introduction

Penn Leads the Vote (PLTV) dramatically changed its engagement strategy both because of the high salience of the 2020 general election as well as the Coronavirus pandemic causing classes to be conducted virtually. The following report outlines the activities and initiatives completed by PLTV, the outcomes of said activities, and future recommendations. We hope this report will illuminate the importance of ongoing voter engagement, not just during presidential election years. We also wrote this brief with the intention to show future generations of the organization what worked and what didn't, in the hopes of making their work more successful.

Please reach out to [pennvotes@upenn.edu](mailto:pennvotes@upenn.edu) with any questions.

## About Penn Leads the Vote

### Mission

Penn Leads the Vote (PLTV) is a student-run, non-partisan program that increases voter engagement and voting while advancing Penn's role of supporting the democratic and civic engagement of the Penn community. PLTV is university-wide and its leadership comes from both the undergraduate and graduate student bodies of the University of Pennsylvania. Leading up to primary and general elections, PLTV connects the Penn community and university partners with the resources needed to register and check registration, to be informed, and to get out to the polls. Throughout the year, PLTV encourages students to learn about and engage with current issues and politics at the local, state, and national level.

### Team

Eva Gonzalez (C22), Director  
Harrison Feinman (C22), Director  
Rania Zakaria (W22), Deputy Director & Field Organizer  
Sid Jaiswal (SEAS 21), Research & Policy Fellow

Alisa Ghura (C23), Programs Coordinator  
Tvisha Malik (W23), Internal Partnerships Coordinator  
Abigail Dym (GED18, MGA18, GRD23), Graduate Student Coordinator  
Will Daniels (C22), Events Coordinator  
Tej Gedela (C24), Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator  
Lucia Hornbacher (C21), External Partnerships Coordinator  
Nicholas Williams (C23), Communications Fellow  
Jessica Olarsch (C21), Design Fellow

## Administrative Partnerships

### Activities and Initiatives

Penn Leads the Vote developed relationships with administrators from various offices to ensure that the entire campus community received relevant voting information. Targeted partnerships included the President, Provost, Vice Provost for University Life, Office of Government and Community Affairs, Chief Wellness Officer, Office of Student Affairs, Undergraduate Assembly, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Paid Professional Staff Association, the Weekly Paid Professional Staff Association, the Penn Athletics Department, and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. These partnerships allowed us to distribute campus resources to every corner of campus, as well as develop initiatives targeted at specific groups.

### Impact

On National Voter Registration Day, the Provost's office sent a University Notification to the entire Penn Community with Penn Leads the Vote resources and information. Additionally, the Chief Wellness Officer and Vice Provost for University Life also included PLTV materials in a pre-election wellness email to the undergraduates and The Office of Student Affairs sent a message to the Class of 2024 on behalf of Penn Leads the Vote. This marks the first time administrators permitted a class-wide email authored by PLTV, instead of one sent on our behalf by student government or administrators. University Communications staffers from VPUL and the President's Office regularly shared and posted voting related content on university instagram accounts. PLTV's co-directors, Eva and Harrison, presented to the University Council about PLTV's activities and strategies. The entire team got the opportunity to meet with Provost Pritchett and President Gutman before the election to discuss their work more intimately. Lastly, PLTV helped OGCA run the on-campus polling places by escorting voters to their specific divisions on election day.

### Recommendations

PLTV should continue to partner with top-level university officials. University Notification remains the sole way to ensure all members of the campus community receive voting information, and it is also the most effective way to reach students in many cases. These emails are even more important during less-salient/underreported elections. Furthermore, inclusion in static university resource hubs such as flu shot clinics, Houston Hall, and website pages will help PLTV's institutional integrity and allow community members to access resources on-demand. Integration of pennvotes.org into permanent resource lists remains crucial so that students know to turn to our resources for reliable and updated information. Meeting with the President and the Provost helps signal to other administrators that they support our cause, as does presentations to the University Council. Working with OGCA to staff polling places further cements

PLTV's role in the university's election infrastructure and allows us to see our impact in real-time, as well as triage incidents on the spot. PLTV's presence is critical in all future elections. In a perfect world, members of the team would become official poll watchers (or poll workers) with the ability to audit the numbers.

## Academic Partnerships

### Activities and Initiatives

Penn Leads the Vote developed and built upon many academic partnerships this semester in order to reach the Penn community through these academic channels. One of our largest academic partners this fall was through the establishment of Canvas modules that could be accessed by entire schools at Penn, initiated by Dr. Terri Lipman of Nursing and Lee Kramer from Wharton. The Engineering School, Wharton School, Nursing School, Annenberg School of Communication, and some students in the College of Arts and Sciences were able to access all of PLTV's election resources through their Canvas. The Canvas modules increased visibility of PLTV's election materials immensely, given that most students access Canvas nearly everyday for their course materials. Additionally, we partnered with Professor Emily Falk and the Falk Lab in order to conduct ABCD email testing on four email blasts that were sent out with election information across different periods of time in the election cycle. Through this research project, we were able to test different messages and see if there were varying levels of effectiveness in encouraging civic engagement. PLTV also worked with the Falk Lab to screen tweets for their voter engagement analysis of social media. The analysis will hopefully provide information that PLTV can use to guide our social media engagement. We also partnered with The Penn Program on Opinion Research and Election Studies (PORES) to host Professor Lapinski for an event on National Voter Registration day about what to expect from election day data.

### Impact

Our Canvas Modules were able to reach students across five different schools, allowing the students at these schools to easily access PLTV's voting materials. Instead of having to search for information by visiting pennvotes.org, the Canvas modules ensured that the information was made readily available on the same platform that thousands of students access their academic resources. This year was the first time that PLTV's voting resources were made accessible to students on Canvas, and actively promoted to students by academic chairs. With Falk Lab, we were able to leverage our relationship with Dr. Falk from previous years to use her lab's expertise to enhance our messaging. This was a unique experience for us to get expert advice on how to tailor our messaging as well as the first time that we have partnered with an academic body to conduct research on PLTV's strategy to improve our work for future semesters. Additionally, this is the first time that PLTV was able to partner with a professor for a PLTV-hosted event. We were able to leverage our partnership with PORES in order to make this NVRD partnership possible and promote PLTV materials.

### Recommendations

We should continue to develop these current partnerships with the Undergraduate schools and the Annenberg School of Communication to ensure that we are able to not only have Canvas modules for their

students in future semesters, but are also able to expand beyond this touchpoint to reach students more directly. More importantly, we should leverage these partnerships to engage with all other graduate schools on campus and have Canvas modules for their students as well. Our ultimate goal should be to have one unified Canvas module for all students, regardless of the school that they are in. We should also continue to work with Falk Lab on message testing with the goal of expanding our testing to a wider audience. Our goal is to conduct message testing on a school-wide email, either sent by the student government or the administration. We should continue to seek out new avenues, both with Falk Lab and other researchers at Penn, to integrate research into the work that PLTV does and the strategy we implement. Lastly, we should continue to forge academic partnerships with institutional bodies like PORES, partner with more professors to help highlight their areas of focus, and integrate the work of PLTV into the academic environment at Penn.

## Diversity and Inclusion

### Activities and Initiatives

At the beginning of the semester, PLTV created a contact list for the 6B, the G12, cultural houses, and Penn First. Over the course of the fall semester, PLTV sent email updates roughly every two weeks to ensure that these organizations and their members had the information necessary to join Motivote, register to vote, and cast a ballot. PLTV also posted information on freshman social media groups, such as Facebook and GroupMe. Closer to the election, we created a survey to collect information about the demographics of Penn's electorate and the salience of various political issues among them.

### Impact

At least eight of the on-campus cultural/diversity organizations we contacted responded positively and forwarded the election information we provided to their members. This proved to be an effective way to spread information to our partners and ensure PLTV materials were widely accessible to students of all backgrounds, especially groups that have been historically underrepresented in elections. Unfortunately, the response rate on our demographics survey was very low in the first semester (28 responses), likely due to it being sent out around midterms and near the election.

### Recommendations

While PLTV was satisfied with the positive responses from various organizations as well as their willingness to pass on the information we shared with them, our work will be strengthened if we have a better understanding of how many organizations/individuals acted on the information provided (e.g. registered based on PLTV info or via PLTV's website). That being said, it was harder to reach students due to the constraints of the virtual semester amid the pandemic, but our strategy should have been informed by this reality in order to achieve stronger virtual engagement throughout the semester. While we are hopefully returning to a more normal semester in which physical contact is possible in the near future, PLTV should continue to harness the power of virtual engagement and online mobilizing moving forward in order to reach as many students as possible.

# Email Outreach

## Activities and Initiatives

PLTV made an effort to balance ensuring students had the resources they need to vote as well as not spamming them with too many emails and risk recipients opting out. To make our messaging as impactful as possible, we asked professors from the political science, communications, and psychology departments to review our main three email blasts and make recommendations. We partnered with the Falk Lab throughout the semester to refine these emails and create four versions for ABCD testing. The first version used autonomy language, the second used community language, the third used a combination of both, and the fourth was a control group.

PLTV sent infrequent emails to our volunteers, the Quaker Vote Project (QVP) organizations, the Voter Engagement Council (VEC) organizations, and a general PLTV listserv. Emails to volunteers were usually about PLTV events or other opportunities that we wanted to make available, such as phone banking. Emails to the whole PLTV listserv were about general things we wanted members of the Penn community to know about, like National Voter Registration Day and voter deadlines. Emails to the QVP and VEC usually contained specific information about voting that we wanted organizations and their members to have (such as voter registration deadlines and information about mail-in voting). Some emails came in the form of newsletters, including the newsletter at the beginning of the semester to all PLTV partners as well as more frequent QVP and VEC newsletters.

## Impact

On National Voter Registration Day, the Provost's office sent a University Notification to the entire Penn Community with Penn Leads the Vote resources and information. The Chief Wellness Officer and Vice Provost for University Life also included PLTV materials in a pre-election wellness email to the undergraduates. Additionally, the Office of Student Affairs sent a message to the Class of 2024 on behalf of Penn Leads the Vote. This marks the first time administrators permitted a class-wide email authored by PLTV. The Undergraduate Assembly, Athletics, undergraduate schools, Graduate Center and many more partners included PLTV resources in their emails. Through these institution-wide emails, PLTV was able to reach many more students and constituencies across campus than we would have been able to independently. In addition, the PLTV listserv contained over 3,000 contacts, and there were over 350 PLTV volunteers, 28 QVP organizations, and 35 VEC organizations. Including the recipients of emails sent by VEC and QVP partners, PLTV expanded its email audience greatly.

## Recommendations

Our email outreach in the spring semester should be focused on creating stronger ties within the Penn community, along with promoting the May 2021 elections in Pennsylvania. PLTV should aim to create partnerships with more organizations both on and off campus, and perhaps we can reach out to students in order to execute this goal. Infrequent emails about information on voting in the May 2021 should be sent to our general PLTV listserv to try to help students turn out. In the future, perhaps more targeted emails should be sent out. All members of the Penn community received an email about PLTV in some capacity, but if we targeted emails to smaller communities (college houses, clubs, and more organizations), then we could see more engagement. In addition, more coordination about what information is getting sent out by various members of PLTV in various capacities would be helpful so that our messaging is more coherent and organized.

# Events

## Activities and Initiatives

On September 22nd, PLTV hosted a virtual National Voter Registration Day event. The event featured a presentation from Penn professor, Dr. Lapinski, from PORES, who discussed expectations about the general election results. PLTV members and volunteers also discussed research being conducted by PLTV. In addition, the event provided an opportunity for the Penn community to ask questions related to registering to vote and casting a ballot to PLTV staff. PLTV also hosted weekly office hours throughout the semester to provide students with an opportunity to raise voting-related questions and concerns. PLTV co hosted two events with the High School Voter Project that gave students a ride to early voting locations. We also streamed ALL In's "Voting Power Hours" on our Facebook page.

## Impact

The QVP events provided a great way to connect with a wide breadth of the students body. It was a good opportunity to interact with students, allowing them to ask questions and receive useful, time-sensitive information about voting. This was particularly important due to confusion surrounding the use of mail-in ballots, which traditionally has not been the primary method of voting for the Penn community. Challenges included the requesting process (students without an in-state drivers license had to use a paper request form), signature matching, and avoiding "naked ballots". These QVP events were a great way to clear up misinformation and make sure everyone had the tools to register and cast their ballot in a timely fashion.

The National Voter Registration Event had strong attendance even though the event was in an online format. Having a Professor Lapinski speak was a great part of the event that allowed students to participate in discussions related to voting and receive an academic perspective on relevant issues. Hosting events with experts in their field is a useful way to build PLTV's credibility while also having an engaging discussion with the Penn community.

## Recommendations

Going forward, PLTV should continue thinking of ways to engage Penn students in non-voting related capacities such as writing representatives and encouraging civic engagement in other capacities. With students having the option to be on-campus but taking classes remotely, it will be important to brainstorm the best ways to have events in the future. PLTV should aim to plan more creative ways to have events as many people are reluctant to join optional Zoom events after spending an entire day in front of the computer. PLTV should expect that many students will disengage now that the 2020 presidential election is over and should brainstorm new ways of broadening our strategy to include other forms of civic engagement beyond voting. Our work with QVP illustrated the success of working with student organizations that already exist as a means to connect to more of the Penn community and spread information to these individuals.

# External Partnerships

## Activities and Initiatives

PLTV managed relationships and projects with various local, state, and national organizations. These partnerships included Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project, ALL IN Challenge, PHENND, other institutions of higher education through the PA Student Voting Coalition, Andrew Goodman Foundation, Students Lead Students Vote Coalition, Ask Every Student, VotER, Motivate, the High School Voter Project, United for Democracy, the Ivy League Votes Challenge, and SEAMAAC, among several others. Throughout the semester, our External Partnerships Coordinator responded to inquiries from organizations looking to work with PLTV, met virtually with these groups, discussed and managed collaboration opportunities, and applied for grants to fund PLTV's initiatives. For example, PLTV was given a \$1,500 grant from Campaign for Community to cover technology and marketing costs, including the Motivate platform, in order to educate and register Penn voters, with an emphasis on underrepresented communities to ensure they have the tools needed to vote. Other grants included \$20,000 from Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition, and \$16,000 for PLTV's Pennsylvania Student Voting Coalition (PASVC).

## Impact

We cultivated long-standing relationships and forged new partnerships with organizations working towards similar civic engagement goals as PLTV. For example, PLTV worked with United for Democracy to engage students this semester despite the difficulties posed by the pandemic. Through this partnership, Penn students were able to participate in phone banking or work the polls on Election Day. We also worked with SEAMAAC to increase our language accessibility and provide voter information tools in Vietnamese, Chinese, Indonesian, and Spanish and partnered with the High School Voter Project to promote early voting among Penn and high school students. These partnerships were extremely valuable to us because they allowed us to leverage the materials and resources of other organizations. We hope to be able to maintain these partnerships in coming years.

## Recommendations

In the future, PLTV can broaden its partnerships and expand its reach by forging new relationships with diverse organizations. We can build on the work we did with SEAMAAC this semester and continue to work with external partners to increase our language accessibility. We can also work with different groups as well as with our Events team to expand on our goal of increasing civic engagement beyond the election cycle. This could include connecting students with opportunities to learn more about policy-making and advocacy. Additionally, PLTV can find diverse ways to leverage partnerships in order to continue engaging the Penn community (e.g. speaker events, giveaways, etc) and thereby overcome Zoom fatigue.

## Graduate Student Engagement

## Activities and Initiatives

PLTV invested in building sustainable and wide-reaching relationships with Penn graduate students, who tend to be less engaged in campus groups and service activities through the university than their undergraduate counterparts. Throughout this semester, the Graduate Student Engagement Coordinator sent six emails to over 120 individuals and graduate groups to stimulate engagement with Motivote and PLTV events. One graduate student subsequently joined the VEC, and six graduate TAs included the PLTV New Student Orientation content on their Canvas syllabus. The Graduate Student Coordinator partnered with the Graduate Student Center to film a Q&A video about voting, which was recorded and posted to social media, and hosted a post-election synchronous Q&A.

## Impact

Graduate students, student groups, and leadership helped promote PLTV's goal of voter engagement and turnout. Leadership and administration in all graduate schools agreed to send voting and PLTV event information to their listservs. Six graduate students used PLTV material to enhance their Canvas TA course pages and many more graduate students used class time to promote PLTV. Graduate students were also important in nudging professors to reduce class requirements on Election Day on top of the university-wide call to do so. 63 graduate students enrolled in Motivote and many TAs highly recommended the platform to their undergraduate students. With one graduate student successfully engaged in VEC, future impact goals include increasing graduate student representation in VEC and in QVP, more explicit TA training around PLTV and incorporating voting into syllabi, and strengthening relationships with graduate groups, in particular GAPSA. Immediate future work will be dedicated to analyzing voter turnout data and considering strategic next-steps for better engaging graduate students and groups.

## Recommendations

Future engagement will focus on three strands. First, we will aim to build a stronger partnership with GAPSA. This will include strengthening our communication ties with the president and the communication coordinator, the latter of whom is a member of Penn staff and thus can help to provide continuity over time as PLTV staff and GAPSA leadership changes. More consistent and streamlined mass communication will be central to disseminating our messaging and GAPSA is a key partner as the larger representative body for all graduate students. Second, we will work to build bridges between graduate and undergraduate students through TA-student relationships and graduate engagement with undergraduate groups, such as VEC and QVP. Undergraduates on college campuses build community differently than graduates, who tend to build relationships and engage off campus more than on campus. PLTV's initiatives will be stronger if graduate students choose to support voting at Penn. PLTV will encourage graduate students to attend events that have tended to receive more support from undergrads. Finally, we will create an opportunity for graduate students across divisions to create an informal voting-focused group, which will provide a pathway to VEC and QVP representation. This will increase our close network capacity beyond that of the Graduate Student Coordinator, which in turn will hopefully increase participation among graduate students.

## Motivote

## Activities and Initiatives



We piloted a new online platform this semester in hopes of ensuring that Penn community members received relevant election information tailored to their voting location and voting method. Motivote allowed us to do this while also encouraging engagement through network effects, competitions, and prizes. Motivote made it easy for us to host competitions among the four undergraduate schools and Penn Athletics & Campus Recreation. In turn, these competitions helped PLTV develop and strengthen key institutional partnerships, making leaders throughout Penn aware of our goals and mission. Motivote also allowed us to raffle off PLTV merchandise such as hats, t-shirts, and mugs.

## Impact

Motivote had a total of 1313 users for the fall semester. Our baseline for Motivote users having never used the platform before was 1000, meaning that we surpassed this goal. For the undergraduate Motivote competition, Nursing had 58 Motivote users, which is 9.97% of their total undergraduate population and made them the winner of this competition. Wharton had 127 Motivote users, which is 5.28% of their total undergraduate population. The Engineering school had 78 users, which is 4.23% of their total undergraduate population, and the School of Arts and Sciences had 89 users, which is 1.44% of their total undergraduate population. These numbers were quite low, which is reflective of a need to have the institutions increase their promotion (in addition to the one email that they sent to their students) of the competition in future semesters in order to have a greater impact on the student body. We also worked with Penn Athletics to encourage athletic teams to join Motivote, but ended up with only 144 athletes and staff joining their teams on Motivote. Penn Athletics promoted the competition to all athletes, including club and varsity. Student organizations through the QVP and VEC were also able to create Motivote teams and encourage their constituencies to participate through email blasts. Volunteers were also encouraged to promote Motivote among their friends, and we hosted a volunteer competition for the most successful promoter of the platform.

## Recommendations

PLTV plans to promote Motivote heavily at the beginning of the next semester to boost engagement. Going forward, it is crucial that partners such as Motivote do not send repeated emails and texts on Election Day as this is already a stressful time for many members of the Penn community. PLTV should spend more time reviewing engagement resources from potential partners before paying for services. Motivote's engagement resources fell short of our own when they should have been a value add.

## Press

### Activities and Initiatives

PLTV communicated frequently with the press. Members of PLTV were interviewed by various press organizations, including *The Chronicle of Higher Ed*, *CNN*, *Politico*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *The Guardian*. Our Communications Fellow and our co-directors were the members who participated in most interviews. Members of PLTV were also interviewed by *The Daily Pennsylvanian* and mentioned in several articles in the publication, and our Communications Fellow periodically sent press releases to *The Daily Pennsylvanian* with news and updates. Our Communications Fellow also wrote two op-eds that were published in *The Daily Pennsylvanian* during the semester: linked [here](#) and [here](#). Our co-directors wrote an

op-ed that was published the week before the election: linked [here](#). PLTV also helped publish a guest op-ed by an undergraduate student who is not affiliated with PLTV for National Voter Registration Day.

## Impact

PLTV was mentioned by a wide variety of well-known outlets between August and November, including *CNN*, *The Guardian*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. PLTV Communications Director Nicholas Williams had two op-eds published in *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, and co-directors Harrison Feinman and Eva Gonzalez co-wrote an op-ed that was published in October. PLTV was mentioned in online publications over 20 times between August and November of 2020, including three times by *Penn Today* and over 10 times in op-eds and articles in *The Daily Pennsylvanian*. PLTV's mentions in articles by reputable and high-profile press outlets has helped establish credibility for our organization and made us more recognizable, while PLTV's frequent mentions in publications affiliated with Penn demonstrates our strong ties within the Penn community. These publications also allowed our voter engagement campaigns to reach a wider audience than our other forms of communication.

## Recommendations

As always, PLTV should take as many interviews with press organizations as possible. We should also send press releases to *The Daily Pennsylvanian* with any pertinent information, as we have previously done. Our publishing strategy for op-eds by members of PLTV in *The Daily Pennsylvanian* worked extremely well this semester, and we should replicate this strategy next semester by publishing three op-eds throughout the semester by PLTV members. We can deemphasize guest op-eds if we even choose to have any at all. *The Daily Pennsylvanian* publishes op-eds about voting that function very similarly to how the guest op-ed functioned which rendered this element of our DP strategy somewhat ineffective. If at all possible, we may want to try to publish in other Philadelphia area publications, such as *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, to increase the visibility and credibility of PLTV.

## Research

### Activities and Initiatives

During New Student Orientation, PLTV's research fellow presented a Preceptorial on "Engaging our Community through Data," which explained the data-driven approach that PLTV has taken to encourage Penn students to become more civically engaged, especially in non-presidential election years. At the beginning of the semester, we recruited a team of 12 volunteers to assist with a wide variety of research tasks, primarily consisting of Motivote data analysis, social media data analysis, and external research survey projects. After the election, we have been working on collecting and analyzing data from the 2020 election, a task that has been made more complicated due to the increased likelihood of students voting outside of Philadelphia.

Throughout the semester, PLTV Staff and Volunteers worked towards various research-related goals. We created an archive of Motivote data that will advance PLTV's long-term mission when it comes to contacting students and fostering engagement. PLTV also has three ongoing research projects. The first is a project hoping to learn if there is a correlation between Penn Student Government voting and voting in

local elections. We are currently working with Penn administration to get access to this data. The second project attempts to determine the impact of COVID-19 on student voting behavior. This survey's collection has concluded with just over 100 respondents, and we will begin analysis soon. The final project is drawing relationships between mental wellness and civic engagement, and we worked with Penn Wellness and Paideia to distribute the survey. We have completed collection with a total of 300 respondents and are in the process of analyzing this data. The results will be featured in several articles in *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, including [this one](#).

## Impact

PLTV's preceptorial on "Engaging our Community through Data," presented by PLTV's Research Fellow Sid Jaiswal, had an attendance of nearly 100 freshmen, leading to the creation of our research volunteer team. Over the course of the semester, we organized the reward structure of the Motivote competition, including weekly tallies and final point breakdowns. We also made recommendations to the Social Media team regarding ways to improve traction on posts. Through analyzing PLTV Volunteer survey data, we were able to determine which channels of interaction are most effective for finding volunteers, which allowed us to shape our strategy as we look forward to next semester. We also partnered with Paideia and Penn Wellness to distribute a survey that sought to ascertain whether there is a correlation between civic engagement and emotional well-being. The survey received wide traction around campus, as it garnered nearly 300 responses and was featured in *The Daily Pennsylvanian*.

We are also working to determine the true impact of PLTV's initiatives on Penn's civic engagement. Through preliminary data available from the 2020 election, it seems that PLTV has had a clear positive impact on Penn student voting trends. Nearly 1300 students signed up for Motivote, with over 300 of those voting in PA. Furthermore, despite COVID and legal restrictions, 2020 student turnout was 52% of the 2016 turnout when comparing on-campus precincts, with only 12% of students living on-campus. We are waiting on more detailed information to be released in the coming weeks and months to more accurately track our impact.

## Recommendations

Moving forward, it is important for every PLTV Staff member to either conduct or have a volunteer on their team conduct research for their regular operations. For example, the social media volunteer team would have a research volunteer aggregate weekly statistics and updates to have ready for weekly staff meetings (or the social media coordinator themselves would do this). The same would go for events, press, internal / external partnerships, etc. The research team would be more focused on election results, utilizing the data collected by the other teams to provide insights, and push for policy changes based on research-driven arguments.

In terms of research specifically, PLTV should take a deeper dive into student voting trends in Philadelphia / around the country and see how we can influence policy to make it more accessible for students to vote. We also want to work with other colleges and schools in setting up their data analytics teams within their GOTV groups. Lastly, as somewhat of a long-term ambitious goal, we want to explore turfing Penn's campus by precinct.

# Social Media

## Activities and Initiatives

PLTV's Program Coordinator and Design Fellow worked together to build up PLTV's social media presence this semester. Our Program Coordinator created a social media strategy over the summer to outline PLTV's social media campaign from the beginning of the semester to Election Day. Our Program Coordinator and Design Fellow met weekly to refine the social media strategy and curate the week's social media content. In this way, they were able to grow our social media audience and spread useful voting related knowledge through our Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter platforms.

Given its increasing popularity, we focused our efforts on Instagram, while continuing to improve our Facebook and Twitter presence as well. We expanded our follower base and posted on a regular schedule, using social media data analytics to determine what kinds of content our followers most value. By the end of the semester, we had a total of 672 followers on Instagram.

We also expanded our use of different social media tools. We created a PLTV linktree so that viewers could go straight from our posts to relevant web pages. We also turned the direct message portal into a form of asynchronous office hours where people could ask questions. We utilized Instagram story, Instagram story highlights, and Instagram live events. For example, our Instagram highlight "At the Polls!" has 250+ views and features 3 of our volunteers. Our Program Coordinator and Design Fellow also started PLTV staff spotlights to promote the amazing work that some of our less recognized staff members do.

In addition to increasing our social media presence, we also began to utilize paid advertising. We first explored Facebook and Instagram advertising but encountered obstacles with Facebook's recent 'special ads' censorship, which has increased the requirements to confirm identification before posting about elections. Instead, we turned to advertising with the Daily Pennsylvanian, a student-run independent news organization that caters to the Penn community. We had a lot of success working with them and purchased 11 ads from them over the course of the semester, 6 of which were posted on their Instagram (with over 15,000 followers) and 5 to their newsletter (which is sent to their listserv of over 10,000 people).

## Impact

One of our main goals was to increase our social media audience. Prior to this semester, PLTV's social media had been relatively lackluster, with less than 200 followers on Instagram and infrequent posts. Alisa was able to increase the PLTV's Instagram presence by 475+ followers ([social media analytics](#)) by manually following Penn students through Penn class pages.

Jessi and Alisa were also able to increase followers' engagement with social media content by curating informative content and making a weekly posting schedule. From August to November 3rd, Jessi and Alisa created 40 posts over the semester (6 of which are now archived). On average, we received 25-50 likes per post. However, our highest liked post was the PA voting eligibility chart, which received 161 likes. We also were able to get high engagement with our Instagram story highlights. One story highlight, "At the polls" has 250+ views.

With the help of PLTV's external partnerships coordinator Lucy Hornbacher, we also used our social media to promote the work of partner organizations. We promoted PORES' Election Day bingo board, Aspen Ideas' talk, High School Voter Project's bus to vote event, Voting Power Hours' text banking event, Lyft's Election Day rides, and Common Press' postcard initiative. We also co-hosted an Instagram Live Event with Chalo Votes and our internal partnerships coordinator, Tvisha Malik; the event had 147 views.

We also developed relationships with other organizations through social media by liking and commenting on their material. In turn, many organizations reposted our materials, sharing them with an even wider audience. Some notable reposts include @uofpenn and @dramygutmann reposted multiple of our posts. In

addition, many greek life organizations, Penn athletic teams, and other Penn agencies reposted our materials as well.

### *Advertising*

We utilized advertising through the Daily Pennsylvanian as a way to do outreach beyond our social media following and to increase our social media following. The Daily Pennsylvanian primarily serves the Penn community and has an Instagram following of 15,500 accounts and an email listserv of a little more than 10,000 people. Over the course of the semester, we purchased a total of 11 advertisements: 6 were posted to their Instagram, 2 were double advertisements in their weekly newsletter, and 3 were single ads in their newsletter. These 11 ads cost \$1,000 and were paid for primarily using our SLSV Implementation Grant. On average, the Instagram ads reached 4,400 accounts (people who viewed the ad), received 152 likes, and were saved by users 5.16 times. In terms of our newsletter ads, on average, 6,670 users opened the newsletter, and our ads received 9.8 link clicks.

## Recommendations

Going forward, PLTV should continue to grow its social media audience and maintain engagement by being thoughtful about what content is being posted and when it is being posted. We recommend continuing to use Linktree and similar platforms to help users get from our social media to our website. It would also be beneficial to have a communications team meeting with some frequency so that all of the staff members involved in communications (program coordinator, designer, and communications fellow) use similar tone, branding, and content.

In the future, it would be helpful to continue advertising through the Daily Pennsylvanian, particularly through their social media. The Daily Pennsylvanian's audience is primarily our target audience, and we have established a good working relationship with them. At the same time, it would also be helpful to expand to use Facebook/ Instagram advertising to reach new audiences on our social media. Unfortunately, this semester it did not work out because of Facebook's restriction on the 'Special Ads Category.' We had to confirm our identification before posting Election related information, and we were never able to complete this process as Facebook did not verify several team members' IDs.

## Undergraduate Student Engagement

### Activities and Initiatives

PLTV hosts the campus-wide Voter Engagement Council (VEC). The VEC is a platform for student groups, both undergraduate and graduate, to share their civic concerns, get answers to voting related questions, find resources for their members, and contribute to campus wide voter engagement goals. The VEC currently encompasses over 35 undergraduate and graduate groups (listed [here](#)) and meets biweekly in order to discuss important election updates and on-campus/PLTV voter initiatives. The group is headed by PLTV's Internal Partnership Coordinator, who spearheads the planning and hosting of the meetings and provides material/answers to member's questions. The VEC played a crucial role in spreading voting information to the student body during the November 2020 election given that PLTV could not hold in-person engagement events and tabling due to COVID-19, which historically have been the primary method for student voter engagement.

The Quaker Voter Project (QVP) allowed for student organizations to partner with PLTV to host voter engagement events for their members. In return, the student organizations could receive mini-grant funding to host the event, as well as recognition on our website. In return for our assistance, clubs participating in the QVP agreed to send three pre-written emails to their members. The QVP is another example of PLTV's commitment to meeting students where they are, and is an alternative for student leaders uninterested in the high level of commitment required for membership in the Voter Engagement Council.

PLTV also engaged with an Undergraduate course called Wharton 101 which is required for all first-year and transfer Wharton students. PLTV worked with two teams of students, the AdVoteCates and Wharton Analytica, to address two key challenges: (1) increasing Graduate student turnout and (2) increasing Wharton and SEAS turnout. The AdVoteCates addressed Challenge 1. Their suggestions included improving international student outreach through speaker events and roundtable discussions, adding a banner to the website home page, creating an FAQ page with Google Forms, and posting a video summarizing all things voting. Wharton Analytica addressed the second challenge. Their recommendations included shifting towards text notifications, sending a weekly nonpartisan newsletter, creating an app, and encouraging professors to reduce workload around Election Day.

## Impact

The Voter Engagement Council (VEC) has representatives from over 35 undergraduate and graduate student groups. Each of these representatives come from groups that have anywhere from 50 to 100 students. The VEC utilized social media competitions, virtual PLTV voter engagement events (like National Voter Registration Day), and email communications in order to spread important election information and engage students. VEC member groups were also expected to sign up for QVP presentations so a PLTV member could directly answer questions and the group's general body meetings. The VEC also helped plan events for students in Philly, like socially distanced walks to early voting locations and outdoor tabling on election day, to ensure that get out to vote initiatives were COVID-19 safe.

Weekly virtual office hours provided undergraduate students an opportunity to engage with PLTV team members and ask voting related questions. During these office hours, undergraduates asked about how to register to vote in PA, how to request a mail-in ballot, and how to find polling locations on election day. The one-on-one setting of office hours was an excellent opportunity for the PLTV team to connect with more undergraduates, particularly first-year students.

National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) educated undergraduate students on expectations for election results on November 3rd. It also highlighted the research work being done by PLTV staff. Through these experiences, undergraduates got to hear from both PLTV team members and from guest speakers. Additionally, NVRD spotlighted a few PLTV volunteer undergraduates who discussed their personal voting experience and why voting is important to them. This event was educational but also exposed dozens of undergraduates to both the PLTV staff and some of our passionate undergraduate volunteers.

The Quaker Vote Project (QVP) worked with undergraduate student groups to engage students in a virtual format given that they were displaced from campus. The QVP worked with student leaders to schedule presentations at club general body meetings. These presentations were hosted by PLTV staff members and volunteers and covered COVID election updates, voter registration and absentee ballot request tutorials, state by state policies, deadlines, and information on how to become a poll worker to help alleviate the shortage. The QVP also offered grants to student groups for non-partisan get-out-to-vote initiatives. Organizations used them to fund virtual civic education events and pay the honorarium for speakers to attend their Zoom events.

## Recommendations

The VEC benefitted from the excitement that existed among students regarding the presidential election. However, going forward it is going to be more difficult to maintain the level of excitement and engagement that encouraged students to commit time to these meetings and PLTV initiatives this semester. We suggest keeping a few factors in mind. First, accessibility and convenience of the meetings is crucial. Online meetings had significantly higher attendance than the in-person ones in the spring because they were less of a time commitment for people. We suggest sticking to online meetings even when campus reopens. Second, finding the right representatives are important. While this is trickier to control, the groups who had representatives who personally felt very strongly about PLTV's mission were the most active during meetings and effectively carrying out PLTV's action items for VEC members. This can make the difference between a productive meeting and ineffective one. Sometimes it is worth directly reaching out to people in organizations who would definitely be invested in their role as a representative to the VEC and soliciting their membership in the council. We found this approach to be particularly effective when we were not getting a response from the club's board of president when we initially reached out.

The QVP ended up being a pretty effective initiative that PLTV recommends pursuing in future semesters with elections. We would recommend using virtual Zoom presentations if possible because they are more accessible and less commitment which increases attendance. If that is not possible, PLTV staff or volunteers should attend in-person club GBMs and should present at those. There was a lot of buy-in from student leaders and that helped the initiative's success. The QVP listserv will be a useful resource in the future to circulate important election updates.

PLTV does not recommend working with Wharton 101 in the future because the engagement required a significant time commitment throughout the semester and the teams did not come up with implementable, targeted solutions to the challenges they were asked to address.

## Volunteers

### Activities and Initiatives

#### **Engagement Strategy & Team Structure**

Given the virtual nature of this semester, PLTV's organizer faced a unique challenge with regard to volunteer engagement. During typical semesters, volunteers assist our voter engagement goals by staffing tables on campus. They usually hand out free merchandise and food to attract passersby and answer questions. We did have a huge increase in volunteer signups this semester—over 350 total including staff and faculty. 105 volunteers completed our volunteer training webinar, allowing them to answer a variety of questions about the 2020 election. All volunteers were encouraged to join a GroupMe to facilitate communication. Volunteers were also encouraged to join Motivote and encourage their networks to do the same.

To keep volunteers engaged and provide opportunities during a difficult time, our volunteer organizer solicited interest in a variety of student volunteer teams to be led by PLTV staff. Those teams are described below. The creation of these teams allowed PLTV staff to engage with volunteers on the tasks in which they were most interested. The teams also facilitated more connection between staff and student volunteers.

### **Volunteer Database Team**

The Volunteer Database team (11 members) assisted the Deputy Director with operational tasks such as communicating with volunteers about the Motivote leaderboard, developing messages for faculty volunteers, tracking volunteer requirements, and ensuring volunteers were aware of training materials. The Deputy Director met with each member individually for 15-minute chats to discuss deliverables and ideas. She also hosted two group meetings. All members of the volunteer database team signed a privacy agreement to ensure confidentiality of data. Communication took place on GroupMe and task management took place on Airtable.

### **Content Creation Team**

Our Program Coordinator and Design Fellow led a small and committed team of volunteers. We hosted around four volunteer meetings with an attendance on average of about five people. Our volunteer group chat had a total of 14 people. The volunteers helped us brainstorm content and ideas during our content brainstorm meetings, and we had a few volunteers who helped us with more specific tasks.

### **Research Team**

Our Research Fellow managed a team of 12 volunteers to assist with a wide variety of tasks, primarily consisting of Motivote data analysis, social media data analysis, and external research survey projects. We held biweekly meetings and check-ins with each team of volunteers. Among the deliverables presented by these volunteers are (1) PLTV Volunteer survey analysis, (2) weekly Motivote updates and recommended action items, (3) social media analytics including recommendations on when to post and which posts perform the best, and (4) independent / team research projects.

### **Language Accessibility Team**

Our Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator put together a team of roughly five volunteers and completed translations into three languages, Spanish, Chinese, and Hindi.

### **QVP Presentations**

Over the course of the semester, PLTV gave over 20 QVP presentations to student organizations and clubs within the Penn community. These presentations provided a way to connect with a wide breadth of the student body and were a great means to spread a variety of voting-related materials about the November election. These presentations also provided students with a space to ask questions to PLTV members. Many students raised questions about the general election, largely due to the increased use of mail-in ballots in this election. These QVP events were a great way to clear up misinformation and make sure more that members of the Penn community had the tools to register and cast their ballot.

## **Impact**

We recruited significantly more volunteers this semester than previous semesters. We also involved staff and faculty in ways that we never had before. We were able to train 105 students on nonpartisan civic engagement. The volunteers were assigned to the following groups based on their skills and interests.

### **Content Creation Team**

Many of our volunteers helped us with social media content brainstorming and giving us feedback on our social media strategy. We had a few volunteers who helped us with specific tasks. Three volunteers — Elizabeth Ford, Sage Levine, and Maya Paul— participated in our “At the polls” Instagram Live Event/ Instagram story, where they posted videos directly to our main Instagram account, giving live updates from



their respective polls. In addition, one volunteer, Jordana Pearlman, reached out to the @uofpenn account and asked them to repost our materials.

### **Research Team**

The research team did a fantastic job with their assigned tasks. The Motivote team (Annie Cheng, Benjamin Ai, and Anya Tullman) consistently completed weekly deliverables, allowing us to narrow our mailing list and provide specific information. Furthermore, our research teams put in a lot of time and effort into creating, distributing, and analyzing their surveys seeking input from the student body, which will provide insight into PLTV's engagement strategies moving forward. Shoutout to Toyosi Abu and Shivani Guha for having their survey featured in the DP!

### **Language Accessibility Team**

The language accessibility volunteer team was able to create Spanish, Chinese, and Hindi translations for voting materials to increase voter outreach to historically underrepresented voting groups. We created infographics in these three languages for registration deadlines and links to the full sets of translated information, which were put up on the website and sent to our diversity and inclusion partners.

### **QVP Presentations**

The QVP events provided a great way to connect with a wide breadth of the students body. It was nice to interact with people and give them an opportunity to ask a lot of great and useful information. Particularly because of use of mail-in ballots, a lot of students were confused. These QVP events were a great way of clearing up misinformation and making sure everyone had the tools to register and cast their ballot.

## **Recommendations**

Going forward, we would like to continue our use of volunteer teams. Some things that will be helpful are standardized leadership guidelines or training for staff leading these teams. The most successful teams were those which had structured task management systems and informal communication channels (FB messenger, GroupMe). Overall, we were able to engage volunteers on a more personalized level than ever before.

### **Content Creation Team**

While our volunteers were incredibly enthusiastic, there were occasions with not enough tasks to assign to them. It would be helpful if we could teach our volunteers more useful skills, such as by giving them a crash course in designing, and then have them take on a more significant role. At the same time, it is important to recognize that this is not always possible with some teams, such as for the social media team, because of tight schedules and specific branding guidelines. That being said, we can strengthen collaboration between the social media data analytics volunteers and the content creation volunteers to streamline our work.

### **Research Team**

Implementing weekly meetings and more frequent check-ins with research volunteers would have been more helpful with retaining engagement. We could have planned a social event of sorts with the volunteers to increase engagement and create a more involved culture around the organization. Communication and organization were ultimately the two traits that led PLTV to success, and we must continue to spread this culture through not only PLTV Staff but the volunteer teams as well.

### **Language Accessibility Team**

Creating a volunteer chat or holding biweekly meetings to improve volunteer performance regarding language accessibility would have benefited PLTV's work in this space. While communication was perhaps even more difficult than usual due to the pandemic, it is important to broaden our lines of communication and meet as a team (even if it needs to be on Zoom).

### **QVP Presentations**

While QVP presentations will be less frequent post-election, it will be important to maintain relationships with the organizations who are a part of QVP. Therefore, as future projects are planned, information about these events need to be distributed to organizations that are a part of QVP.

## **Website**

Our website, [pennvotes.org](http://pennvotes.org), remained a crucial element of our engagement strategy. We promoted the website in all of our outreach and updated it throughout the election cycle to reflect changes in real time. We created an early voting page with the location of satellite location offices and for the first time launched non-English information. On our website, community members could request a mail-in ballot request form be sent to their home with a pre-paid envelope via an embedded TurboVote form sponsored by one of our partners. Students could also register online through our embedded, customized Rock The Vote registration tool. We also promoted state-by-state guidelines published by our Ask Every Student cohort and had a dynamic calendar with voter deadlines in all 50 states + DC.

We must continue to promote the website as a comprehensive and customized tool for Penn voters. Moreover, it will be crucial to keep it updated and launch new resources when they are requested or necessary. The website must be a dynamic tool rather than a static one, especially as we navigate a virtual semester .

## **Budget**

Aggregate Student Wages Funded by PLTV: \$6,392.09  
Fellowship Funding from External Organizations: \$2,700  
Digital Advertising: \$2,100  
Mini Grants to Partners: \$1,256.30  
Motivote: \$3,700  
Supplies: \$3,862.61  
Administrative: \$3,116