

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

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Author(s): Director of External Affairs Hulett

Sponsor(s): Speaker Cheng

Committee: Student Life

Draft: Vote

Creation of the Civic Engagement and Advocacy University Committee

Whereas, Civic engagement is a critical component of our democratic government and process; and

Whereas, Civic engagement and health is not solely determined by registering and voting in national elections, but also signing petitions, contacting representatives, donating to political causes, discussing politics with family and friends, volunteering, group involvement, and social connectedness; and

Whereas, Texas ranks among the lowest in the nation for political participation and civic involvement¹; and

Whereas, “Communities with strong indicators of civic health as measured by the Civic Health Index have higher employment rates, stronger schools, better physical health, and more responsive governments”²; and

Whereas, Despite an increase in accessibility to vote through the use of county-wide polling stations, extended voting hours, and an early voting location on campus, youth (under-35) voter turnout in Houston stagnated during the November 2019 city-wide election³; and

¹ <https://moody.utexas.edu/centers/strauss/texas-civic-health-index/about-texas-civic-health-index>

² https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/2018-Texas_Civic_Health_Index.pdf

³ https://www.fox26houston.com/whats-your-point/early-voting-numbers-are-in-and-houston-seems-apatetic-about-city-election?fbclid=IwAR3Q6UW6Pt15NYx09PWLYPv2TfOgOgdmEUfQpliR0_dQWKZBWBjEzt8h9jg

Whereas, Historic Texan youth voter turnout in the 2018 general election could be attributed to the efforts of students and faculty organizing on campus to create opportunities for engagement⁴; and

Whereas, Though past Administrations of the Student Government Association have made strong efforts to promote student civic engagement, this trend may not continue in future administrations due to different agenda priorities; and

Whereas, The University of Houston currently lacks a centralized position, organization, group, office or department to oversee and promote civic engagement on campus;

Whereas, Numerous individuals, groups, departments, and organizations have struggled in the past to coordinate and consolidate the many different civic engagement and voter advocacy efforts on campus at one point in time in an effort to best and most efficiently reach students; and

Whereas, Because civic engagement has steadily declined nationally over the last two decades, it is important that we take time to explore what engagement tools, strategies, and processes will best meet the needs and conditions of specific populations, specifically students at the University of Houston.

Therefore, be it enacted by the 57th Senate of the Student Government Association of the University of Houston:

That, starting immediately upon the passage of this legislation, the new “Civic Engagement and Advocacy University Committee” will be added to the University of Houston Student Government Association bylaws and will consist of at least three (3) and a maximum of five (5) Student Government representatives. There must be at least one (1) and a maximum of two (2) voting representatives from within the Student Government Executive Branch. All other Student Government representatives can be Senators or members of the general student body. All Student Government representatives will be nominated by the Vice-President and confirmed by the Senate.

Be it further enacted, that there be at least one (1) and a maximum of two (2) voting representatives confirmed and appointed by the University of Houston Faculty Senate.

Be it further enacted, that there be one (1) voting representative from each relevant, or civically focused group, organization, and/or department on campus that expresses interest in joining the committee, with a maximum of ten (10) seats available for this. These representatives will be selected at the discretion of each of the groups, organizations, and/or departments. After selecting representatives, each group will complete and submit an

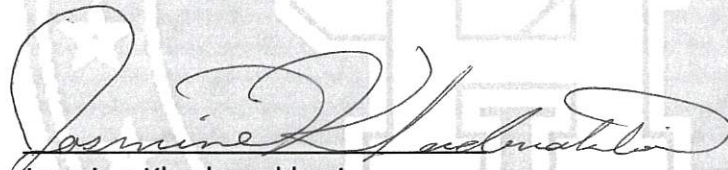
⁴ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/youth-latino-mobilization-paid-midterms-now-groups-gear-2020-n934516>

interest application form to the committee chair and will be admitted once they have been confirmed by the committee according to the committee bylaws.

Be it further enacted, that the purpose and goal of this committee is to facilitate collaboration and cooperation on civic engagement related endeavors and initiatives on campus amongst different relevant groups, organizations, and/or departments; and

Be it further enacted, that the committee will work towards fulfilling its purpose and achieving its goals by executing all of its mandatory requirements and/or tasks, including:

1. Advertising upcoming city, county, state, and federal election voting hours and polling locations on campus through coordination with local election officials;
2. Semi-regular (at least once a month) accessible voter registration tablins throughout the academic year, availability permitting;
3. Planning and hosting at least one (1) large voter registration and/or election related event each academic year;
4. Planning and hosting at least one (1) Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar training on campus or online each academic year;
5. Submitting a report to the Director of External Affairs, President, and Speaker within four (4) weeks following a large event that will include, but is not limited to, statistics, feedback, pros and cons, and recommendations for the future. The report will then be sent out to the Senate by the Speaker with the next Senate Meeting agenda.



Jasmine Khademakbari

Student Government President

Date of President's Approval: 10/9/2020

APPROVED



Julian Cheng

Speaker of the Senate

Date of Senate Approval: 10/9/2020