



**Resolved Commitment to Voter Engagement  
at the University of San Francisco**  
Resolution 19-20-01

**Whereas** the University of San Francisco, hereafter referred to as “the University”, prides itself on being a model example of the power of commitment to social justice and civic engagement for universities nationwide; and

**Whereas** the act of voting in this country, given our history of voter suppression, discrimination, and disenfranchisement, is one that must be upheld, protected, and exercised wherever possible, thus making removing any and all barriers to voting an imperative act; and

**Whereas** young people, especially young people of color, tend to be statistically underrepresented in electoral politics due to a lack of equitable access to polling locations, civic knowledge, and various other barriers that inhibit their ability to vote, and subsequently are not adequately nor fairly represented in electoral politics; and

**Whereas** the University has the opportunity to engage with young voters and encourage them to become civically-minded, community-centric, and politically engaged, and thus the impetus is on the University community as a whole to rise to this responsibility and to act in good faith in this matter; and

**Whereas** the Leo T. McCarthy Center’s USF Votes Initiative has significantly increased the prevalence of a culture of civic participation on USF’s campus, and has further identified reasonable institutional changes which will continue to foster said culture of electoral engagement and active voting; and

**Whereas** many states have provisions allowing for employees to have time off to vote, and according to California Elections Code Section 14000, as stated by the California Secretary of State’s Office, employers are required to allow their employees two hours of time off to vote on election day without deduction of pay; and



**Whereas** these provisions have had marked impacts in terms of reducing barriers to vote, especially for low-income populations who otherwise would not have access to voting in person due to their employment situation; and

**Whereas** University students often have multiple club, sport, class, work, and other commitments which impede their ability to vote, thus minimizing their voice politically in a way that is disproportionate to other segments of the electorate; and

**Whereas** the McCarthy Center’s Assistant Director for Public Service Program, Angie Vuong, noted that time off to vote is a key policy the University can adopt to stimulate voter engagement, saying,

“As a University that prepares students to be ethical public service leaders, one way we can put that mission into action and not just a tagline, is at the ballot box. As a student body, our voting rate was only 54.6% in the last presidential election, 4 percentage points higher than the national average. This statistic highlights the urgency of voting and how it is imperative that students at USF are given the opportunity to take time off to vote in not only the presidential election, but also the midterms, and municipal elections as well. We can do better, and we should do better. Having time off to vote at the polls on election day sends a different message about what this institution values. Is it actually social justice and advocating for equity, diversity, and inclusion? Is it about really speaking truth to power? Is it equipping our students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be change agents in their communities? If it is all of these things, then the opportunity to vote is one way we move the conversation forward of how our country moves forward, how our institution transforms, and how our students evolve as individuals who have a voter identity. We want USF to be more than just the national average.”

**Whereas** University student Helen Wheatley, a junior, stated that time off to vote would greatly benefit her and allow her to be more civically active, saying,

“If I were given time off from class to vote, I know I would feel encouraged and supported by my university to be civically engaged. While we tend to promote civic engagement in the classroom, through social justice initiatives, service learning, and more, the university needs to create a space for students to actually affect the systems we discuss and debate. If I don’t have time off from class, I’m put at a crossroads of choosing whether or not I use an absence in a class, potentially affecting my grade, to vote. The university should allow an option for students, who are part of one of the smallest voting demographics, to use voting day for its intended purpose: to cast a vote, and share our voice.”



**Whereas** a 2018 Washington Post article entitled “Want Americans to Vote? Give them the Day Off” noted,

“There are many reasons so few Americans vote, but among them is that the United States is one of the few countries that holds elections on a workday. Finding time to vote during a workday imposes a significant burden that falls disproportionately on workers and students, who frequently cite scheduling conflicts with work or school as their reason for not voting.”

**Whereas** the University frequently allows excused absences for students for school-sponsored events, such as intercollegiate athletic events, organizational events, etc. and an activity as imperative as exercising the right to vote should be given the same treatment; and

**Whereas** University students should receive the same time-off-to-vote rights as given to employees, and there are already established processes for how to accommodate school-sponsored absences;

**Be it resolved by ASUSF Senate of the University of San Francisco, representing all the undergraduates of the University;** that the University of San Francisco enact a ‘Resolved Commitment to Voter Engagement’ immediately by instating the following practices and policies;

**Resolved;** the University of San Francisco on all election dates (local, state, and federal) allow students to have time off to vote from classes, on-campus jobs, and/or any other University commitment without penalty of absence or pay;

**Resolved;** students will be informed of their ability to take time off to vote and encouraged to do so with written notice in class syllabi (in cases of students needing time off of class, and where there is an election being held on the day when class is scheduled), or with other written documentation (in cases of students needing time off from other university commitments, including work or athletic events)

**Resolved;** students who opt to use this to take time out of class or other commitments to vote will advise their professor or supervisor of their intention to take time off to vote at least two days in advance either in-person or via email, not take an unreasonable amount of time to vote, and provide their professor or supervisor proper documentation of voting if requested;



**Resolved;** the University registrar, staff, and faculty will ensure students can easily register to vote by providing a permanent link to online voter registration via the MyUSF homepage, as well as in class syllabi;

**Resolved;** there will be a polling place for all elections held by the City and County of San Francisco on campus, in the War Memorial gym or a comparable location in perpetuity, as they have been held in past years;

**Resolved;** that the relevant offices within the administration of the University of San Francisco will work with ASUSF Senate on a reasonable timeline in which these changes can be implemented, and will be fully implemented before the 2020 presidential primary to encourage participation in the nearing presidential election.

**Submitted by:** Cassie Murphy, Senior Class Representative

**Supported by:**

USFVotes

Leo T. McCarthy Center