

Team Name: Pizza Party
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DP3 Research Plan *Draft*
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Project Objective:

The objective of our study is to increase voter engagement among SMU students. Currently SMU enrolls more than 11,000 students from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and nearly 100 foreign countries. Approximately 50% of SMU students come from outside of Texas. The leading home states (after Texas) for undergraduate students are, in descending order, California, Florida and Illinois. Given that this represents a large group, we will focus our inquiry on the ways we can help registered students cast absentee ballots while there are “away” at college.

Source: <http://www.smu.edu/AboutSMU/Facts/CampusProfile>

Research Questions and Topics:

1. Do students know how/when/where to vote?
2. Have any students voted before?
3. Do students want to vote?
4. How do students feel about voting?
5. Do they feel their votes matter?
6. How do students feel about voting?
7. Do students recognize the importance of participating in the election process?
8. Do students realize they can complete a form annually that gives them access to casting an absentee ballot? Can they?
9. Do students know where to find information about the topics and candidates on the ballot? If they do, do they visit/use these places/forums/websites?
10. Would students be more inclined to participate in the election process if they first cast a ballot in the national election?
11. Would students be more inclined to vote if they become engaged in local politics and causes? What about campus politics/causes and student organizations?
12. How many SMU students are eligible to vote?
13. What is preventing students from voting?
14. What emotions do people feel right after they vote?
15. Do students feel their voting habits change when they live in different locations?
16. Do people feel their vote is contextualized/added to a narrative in their identity?
17. Are students that hold leadership positions in student organizations more likely to vote? If so, why do they think this impacts their likelihood of voting?

18. Are those who participate in Student Senate elections actively involved in local and national elections?
19. Do students feel represented throughout the election process? If not, how would they feel more represented?
20. Are candidates talking about issues that matter to the typical college student? What issues matter to the typical college student?
21. Do students identify with a particular party? If not, does this impact their decision to vote or get involved with the election process?
22. Do people feel like they're sufficiently informed to vote?

Research Methods and Activities:

1. Love/Breakup Letter - We will have a group of people (TBD) sit down and spend 10 minutes maximum writing either a love letter or break-up letter with respect to their feelings about voting and the election process as a whole. This free stream of writing will allow us to see the true opinion people hold with respect to this process; it will allow us to better understand how we can increase voter engagement and turnout in future elections.
2. Graffiti Wall - On November 3rd, we will create an artifact for students to post their thoughts on having voted or not being able to vote. We are still thinking on where. Perhaps the Varsity, Commons, Dedman Rec or one of the dining halls. This will give us a really pure understanding of the relationship people have with voting seeing that it is anonymous and promotes an honest point of view that others can expand upon.
3. Cognitive Walkthrough - We will leverage our questionnaire and include a question that garners interest in participating in this research activity. We are still deciding if we want to incentivise participation.
4. Questionnaire - We will invite at least 100 SMU students to complete an online questionnaire.
5. Interview - We plan to interview Jeff Casper, who was recently elected into Mesquite's City Council. Jeff is a teacher at John Horn High School in Mesquite, Texas. We plan to interview Jeff for at least 20 minutes. We plan to create at least 10 questions.

Recruiting and Access:

For the **Interview**, Omar plans to interview Jeff Casper this weekend when he comes over to Omar's home for a party. Jeff is a friend of Omar's girlfriend.

For the **Questionnaire**, we will reach out to Mickey Saloma for him to assist us in distributing an email blast to SMU Lyle students with a link to our questionnaire.

Based on results of the questionnaire, we will invite participants to take part in our **Cognitive Walkthrough** and **Love Letter**.

For the **Graffiti Wall**, we will find an area with high traffic for students to participate via this research method.

Calendar:

October 30: Pair with Love/Break Up Letter

October 31: Omar will schedule interview with Jeff Casper.

November 3: Graffiti Wall

November 5: Cognitive Walkthrough

Research Artifacts:

- Notes from Interview with Jeff Casper
- Pictures of Cognitive Walkthrough and Graffiti Wall
- Printed copy of Questionnaire
- Samples of the Love Letters/Breakup Letters