Resolution # 71-10
The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA)
The Pennsylvania State University

of the 71st Assembly
December 8th, 2021

Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,

Designating Election Days as University Non-Instructional Days
Supporting UPUA's initiative to designate election days as non-instructional days and launch a survey to assess students' opinions on the same
(Decided: [Y / N / A])

1 **Nature of the Situation:**
2
3 Participating in the democratic process of voting is a civic duty. Citizens of a democratic county
4 cast their votes to hold their leaders accountable and make their voices heard. It is critical that
5 those eligible to vote have minimal barriers to exercise their fundamental constitutional right.
6 However, local, state, and general elections often take place during the week, when individuals
7 may be busy with their jobs, schoolwork, and may be unable to take time off to cast their votes.
8 This restriction applies to the students of Penn State University as well. With classes, coursework,
9 research obligations, and other academic commitments, students of Penn State may find it
10 challenging to take time out of their schedules to cast their votes. It is imperative that the University
11 ensures its students have the ability to cast their votes with the least inconvenience and obstacles.
12
13 Penn State has seen an increase in student voter turnout in the past decade. The most recent
14 general election in 2020 saw a student voter turnout of 69% — an increase from a 56% student
15 voter turnout in 2016[1]. However, this is only 3% higher than the national student voter turnout of
16 66% in 2020[2]. We believe that voter turnout among Penn State students can be drastically
17 increased by announcing election days as University non-instructional days. This would allow

---

[1] https://www.psu.edu/news/student-affairs/story/student-voting-penn-state-saw-significant-increase-2020/

[2] https://tufts.app.box.com/v/democracy-counts-2020

students to go to voting locations whenever most convenient for them to cast their votes, rather than having to take time out of their already busy schedules. A non-instructional day would also allow students to volunteer at polling stations and participate to a greater extent in the election process. Many universities have policies in place that mandate election days as holidays, including, but not limited to, American University, Colorado College, Columbia University, and Brown University. Penn State should do the same to promote participation in elections among students.

The University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) recently passed a similar resolution calling on the University to mandate local, state, and federal election days as holidays[3]. After consultation with Faculty Senate committees and the Registrar's Office, UPUA has revised this agenda to support define these days as 'non-instructional' rather than 'holidays.' As the 'non-instructional day' designation is intended to apply to all students, graduate students should be released from research and administrative assistantship responsibilities if possible. Supervisors should be expected to protect this time for their students and to support their civic responsibility.

Additionally, as part of their resolution, the UPUA launched a survey among undergraduate, graduate, and professional students at Penn State to assess students' attitudes about this issue[4].

Recommended Course of Action:

By adopting this resolution, the Graduate and Professional Student Association at Penn State calls upon the Penn State administration to announce a policy that would mandate local, state, and federal election days as University non-instructional days via a University Faculty Senate legislative approach. The GPSA also supports Resolution 09-16 passed by the UPUA and supports the continued distribution of the survey to obtain feedback from students on this topic.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandeep Krishnakumar
Speaker of the Assembly
Delegate, College of Engineering

President _____   Affirm   Veto

The Graduate and Professional Student Association

---

[3] https://www.upua.org/legislation/blog-post-title-three-yb5k7-x8k7j-wzxsd
[4] https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6xL2mZdxYsnxpye