



HART Program
Houston Action Research Team
Engaged Research Opportunity
Fall 2022

Registering and Empowering Young Voters in Houston

Texas state law requires that all high school principals offer voter registration opportunities for eligible students twice each year. However, compliance with this law is weak and uneven across the state, even within individual school districts. The law is not enforced by the Texas Secretary of State's Office and school administrators often lack the knowledge, resources, and motivations needed to enact the policy. As a result, many young people—especially those from underrepresented populations—graduate from Texas high schools unaware of the power that their individual and collective votes can have on their lives and their communities. The purpose of this HART project will be to develop an effective and sustainable high school voter registration system for the Houston Independent School District that identifies and leverages the strengths of key area stakeholders while empowering HISD youth as voters and as leaders in their schools and communities.

This project will contribute to the Civic Engagement initiative of the [Houston Endowment](#), a private philanthropic institution that works across the community for the benefit of the people of greater Houston. The Houston Endowment's [Civic Engagement initiative](#) has a special interest in youth civic engagement and electoral participation, and the outcomes of this project are intended to inform the Endowment's decisions about how they can most effectively invest resources to grow and sustain youth voter engagement in Houston and beyond.

During the Fall semester of 2022, this Houston Action Research Team will:

- Review available literature, reports, and other materials about the Texas high school voter registration law and compliance efforts, especially in HISD
- Identify, interview, and map out the relationship between key stakeholders to better understand their motivations, strengths, challenges, positions, partnerships, and existing and potential roles regarding high school voter registration
- Develop a process, set of resources, and a coalition of key stakeholders that will enable all HISD high schools to offer effective, inclusive, and engaging voter registration opportunities for and in partnership with their students
- Design an accessible and easy to use system for collecting and organizing data on HISD high school voter registration that can be used to track and assess progress

This engaged research opportunity is available to Rice undergraduate students for Fall of 2022. An interdisciplinary team of four students, each of whom will bring different, but equally important, skills, knowledge, and experiences, will undertake this project. Team members will each work approximately 10 hours per week on this project between August 29th and December 16th under the guidance of Professor Melissa Marschall (Political Science) and the CCL and a graduate student team advisor, and will receive \$10/hour for their project work. Work time will be

flexible, although team members must attend weekly meetings and must coordinate time to work with other team members on the project as needed. Undergraduate students from **all fields of study** with interests and/or skills in at least some of the following areas are encouraged to apply:

Voting and electoral participation, civic engagement, youth empowerment, data collection and management, interviewing, stakeholder analysis, professional writing, public presentations, teamwork, community engagement

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE Sunday, June 12, 2022 at 11:59pm
To inquire or apply contact Dr. Jessica Khalaf, jkhalaf@rice.edu
For more about Rice's HART Program, visit: <http://ccl.rice.edu/hart>