

Integrating TurboVote into an Online Pre-Semester Process

The University of Chicago

TurboVote at The University of Chicago

The University of Chicago (UChicago), an urban research institution home to 15,700 students, has incorporated TurboVote into their student voting playbook since 2012. Support for TurboVote comes from the nonpartisan UChicago Institute of Politics (IOP), where both staff and students collaborate on how best to engage their peers with the tool.

One of UChicago's [most successful promotions](#) of TurboVote takes place each fall when the incoming class goes through orientation. Throw an inter-house signup competition into the mix along with online pushes of TurboVote hitting students' inboxes and social media feeds, and you have a campus working toward an exciting culture of democratic engagement.



In 2017, the team at UChicago was eager to build upon their success and empower students to vote in their local elections. Even better, the University of Chicago Democracy Initiative (UCDI)—an independent, nonpartisan, student-led group—had recently become an officially registered student organization and was prepared to take on a larger role in TurboVote implementation. Improving upon TurboVote's inclusion within the my.UChicago student portal was the perfect place to start.

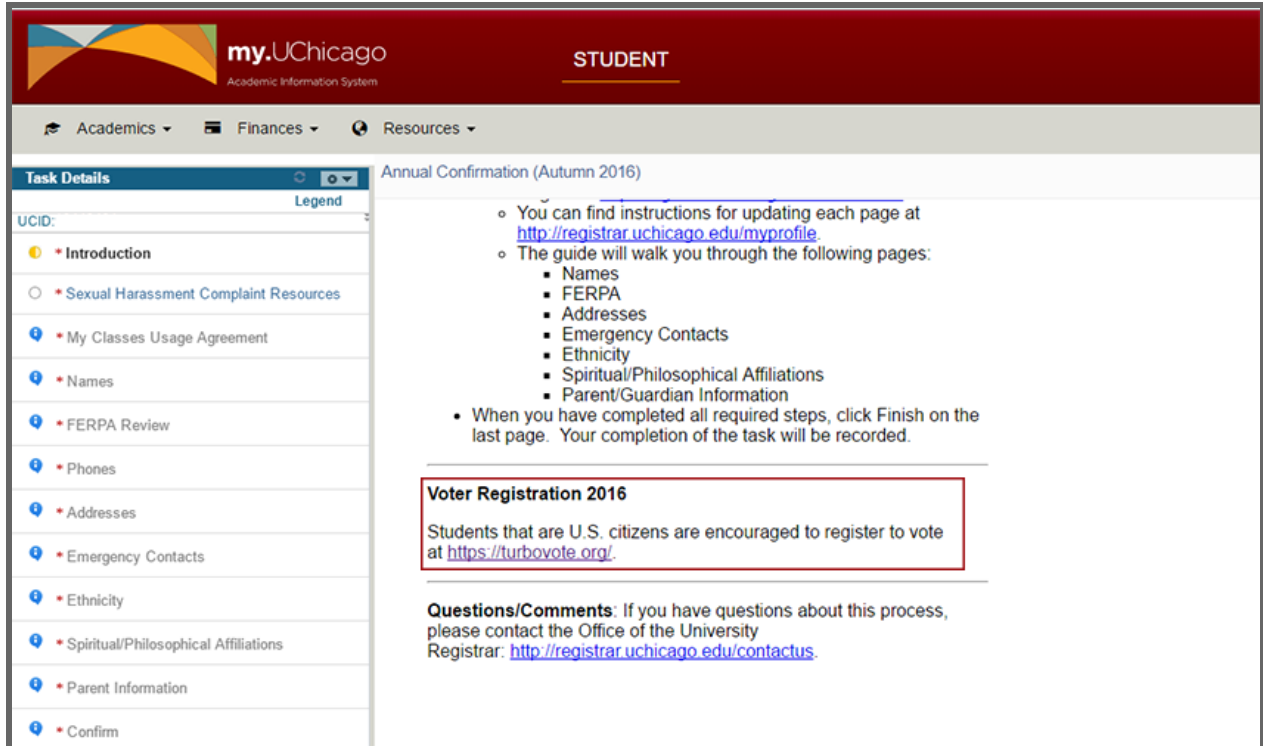
Key implementation stakeholders

- 1. University of Chicago Democracy Initiative (UCDI)**
Andrew Corzo '19, Program Manager
- 2. University of Chicago Institute of Politics (IOP)**
Crystal C. Coats, Director, Civic & Campus Engagement
Sam Gonzalez, Partnerships & Engagement Coordinator
- 3. Office of the University Registrar**
Scott Campbell, University Registrar
Zachary Swartz, Deputy University Registrar
Mike Kegler, Director of Systems and Technology

The idea: aiming higher

In the fall of 2016, UChicago's TurboVote team and the registrar's office began talking about the possibility of engaging student voters through processes overseen by Scott and his colleagues. As a result of those early talks, voter registration through TurboVote made its first appearance within Annual Confirmation, the online process UChicago students must complete each autumn in order to enroll in classes for the subsequent quarter.

Annual Confirmation is presented through the my.UChicago portal; the online checklist itself is created using a feature of Oracle's PeopleSoft Campus Solutions called Activity Guides.



While this 2016 call-to-action on the Introduction page of Annual Confirmation was successful in generating TurboVote signups—around 700 in total—Andrew was hopeful they could take the integration even further and call more attention to the voter engagement services right at students’ fingertips.

The process: leveraging connections

In the summer of 2017, the TurboVote partnerships team asked Mike Burke, Harvard’s registrar and key stakeholder in a similar implementation on his campus, to facilitate email introductions between TurboVote staff and fellow registrars. Armed with [the story](#) of Harvard’s success, the TurboVote team provided registrars with some introductory information and made the first appeal to a responsibility many registrars hold in high regard: connecting students with the information they need to vote.

Scott quickly got in touch and indicated his interest in learning more about how UChicago could improve what they were already doing with voter engagement and PeopleSoft. Soon, representatives from UCDI, the IOP, the registrar’s office, and TurboVote connected over the phone to discuss how to make it happen.

“Once we understood what was available, we wanted to make it a top-notch service for the students.”

Andrew made the case from a student’s perspective, while Scott and Mike began thinking through the technical pieces. The group also discussed how to frame the inclusion of TurboVote within the online checklist, in particular, making sure students knew that signing up for TurboVote’s services was highly encouraged, but, of course, optional.

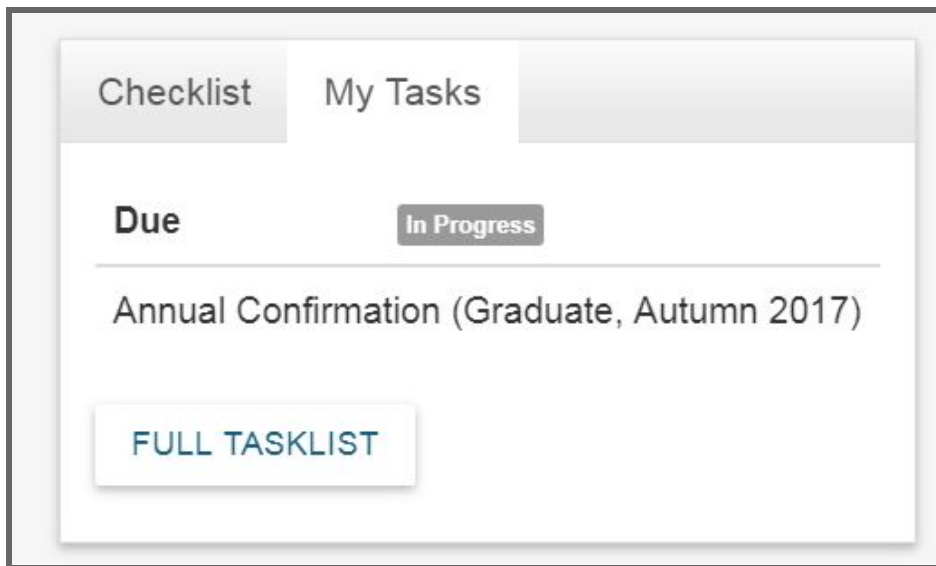
With the help of the iframe code provided by the TurboVote team, incorporating the tool directly into the Activity Guide interface was an easy technical lift. In advance of the launch, Andrew and the IOP also worked together to request customizations for their TurboVote site, including adding UChicago’s maroon as the accent color and custom language on the “Done” page pointing interested students toward more information about how to get involved with UCDI.

As a final step, the team created a unique [referral code](#) (“2017-checkin”) that would append to UChicago’s TurboVote link in order to track through their Admin Console just how many TurboVote signups were generated through Annual Confirmation 2017.

The implementation in action

1. Alert within my.UChicago

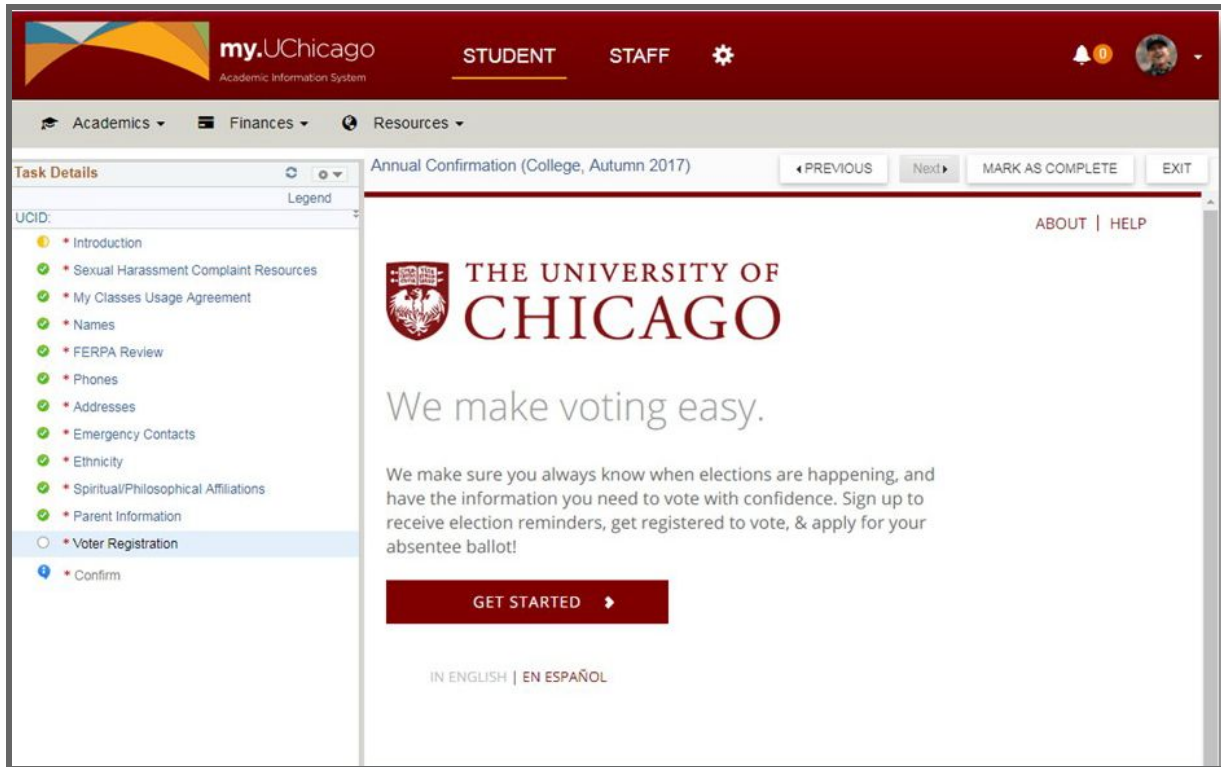
Students log in to see they have an assigned task they need to complete. Upon clicking “Full Tasklist,” they see the clickable link.



Task	Due Date	Status	Institution	Context Information
Annual Confirmation (Graduate, Autumn 2017)		In Progress	The University of Chicago	UCID:

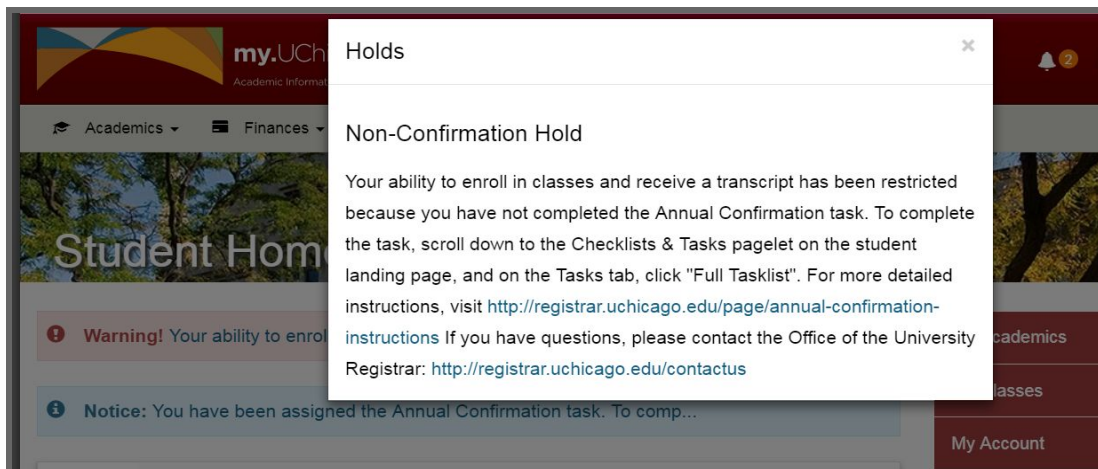
2. Voter registration within the Activity Guide

After clicking through the majority of the checklist, students are presented with the option to sign up for TurboVote within the Activity Guide interface. In the Introduction section, "Voter Registration" is noted as optional, and students can bypass the page by clicking "Mark as Complete."



3. Account hold

If students do not complete the task, they are assigned a hold that appears prominently in the my.UChicago portal.



The results

By the numbers

Annual Confirmation 2017 went live in early September and remained open for about three months. In that time, more than 4,400 TurboVote signups were attributed to the “2017-checkin” referral code, which means approximately 28 percent of UChicago’s student population engaged with TurboVote via this online process. Moreover, voter registration (even in an off-year for elections) was seen by *all* students as an integral part of preparing for their upcoming semester at the University of Chicago.

Qualitative impact

Each corner of campus involved in making this implementation a reality was excited by its incredible success. Andrew saw signs of its impact as he and fellow members of UCDCI conducted their usual TurboVote tabling events throughout the semester, noticing that conversations with first-year students in particular were more productive and focused upon next steps for getting ready to vote.

“Signing up during [Annual] Confirmation prepped [students] so they could then come with questions at the tables. They weren’t scrambling because they already knew what they wanted to ask.”

Finishing 2017 as the top-performing TurboVote campus, UChicago is committed to building upon their success throughout the 2018 midterm election season. The team is eager to repeat TurboVote’s incorporation within autumn 2018’s Annual Confirmation process, noting that because TurboVote is now a part of the Activity Guide template, it’s easy to copy over for next year.