

To Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz and Registrar DiGrazia,

We are writing this letter on behalf of the UNC community to call for classes to be canceled on Election Day 2022 so that students will have time to vote. We also ask that future academic calendars do not schedule classes on the date of federal, local, or primary elections.

Promoting democracy is an important goal of our university. Americans are becoming completely disillusioned with politics at a time when voting and civic involvement with our democratic system could not be more important. Young people, as the future of our country, must engage and participate in politics if we wish to reverse this trend. This is a significant burden for students who are already busy with classes. In recent elections, nearly half of nonvoting students cited being too busy on Election Day as a reason for not voting<sup>1</sup>. Giving students the day to vote on Election Day is a clear mandate and signal that will have a transformative impact on youth civic engagement at our university. As a public leader in North Carolina, our university must take the lead and help young people be fully engaged.

A well thought out academic calendar for the 2022-2023 school year has already been created and approved by the Chancellor. We understand that this was a complex process that involved the effort of a variety of groups on campus. However, the academic calendar has been modified after its initial approval in the past, and it is critical that we take this important step to not hold classes on Election Day. Nearly 20 universities have recognized the importance of this issue and have canceled classes on Election Day<sup>2</sup>. Elon University began canceling classes on Election Day in 2020 and saw a 25.2 percentage point increase in student turnout over 2016 (over 10 points higher than the average increase in turnout among college students)<sup>3</sup>.

The existing calendar includes multiple days off for students, in the form of wellness days. Students could be given the day to vote on Election Day by moving the September 6th Wellness Day to November 8th. Both of these dates are on a Tuesday, meaning that the different class meeting patterns would still be in balance. While the September 6th date would extend the Labor Day weekend, providing a convenience for students, the importance of the student vote to our democracy outweighs this convenience. Students are willing to move this Wellness Day to Election Day so that they can vote.

We are willing to provide any support that is necessary to modify the calendar to cancel classes on Election Day 2022. As community members, we welcome a thoughtful conversation on how we can give students the day to vote on Election Day 2022.

Best Regards,

Sam Hiner  
President, NC Young People's Alliance

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<sup>1</sup> <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/why-youth-dont-vote-differences-race-and-education>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dayondemocracy.org/map>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.elon.edu/u/news/2021/11/02/turning-out-voting-by-elon-university-students-jumped-in-2020/>

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