



Office of Civic Engagement
Sewanee's All In Engagement Action Plan
Fall 2016
Submitted November 8, 2016

The University of the South is committed to preparing its students for lives of achievement and service. To further this purpose, the University has a range of civic engagement programs in partnership with local, regional, and international community organizations. The Office of Civic Engagement serves as the central point of contact with its civic engagement partnerships, as well as support for student, staff, and faculty civic engagement initiatives. The Office of Civic Engagement originated in Fall 2015 and introduced political engagement as a pillar for its office for the 2016-2017 academic year.

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Our Political Engagement Goals and Initiatives:

- **Voter Registration Initiative:** Sewanee partnered with TurboVote to create our University's own voter registration platform (sewanee.turbovote.org). Sewanee was ranked 2nd on TurboVote's Leaderboards with the percentage of student body signed up in between August 1-October 6th, 2016. These efforts included a partnership between the Office of Civic Engagement (OCE) and the Student Government Association (SGA). OCE trained their work studies and Bonner Senior Interns on how to register student walk-ins. SGA tabled in our University cafeteria during high-trafficked lunch hours. SGA's student-led participation was a huge factor to our success. As of Election Day, we registered 523 individuals through TurboVote.
- **College Debate 16:** Student Phillip Sharp (C'18) was selected as a delegate for the state of Tennessee. He gathered with other delegates in June and September at the College Convention at Dominican University of California. The mission of College Debate 16 "is a national, non-partisan initiative to empower young voters to identify issues and engage peers in the presidential election."¹ Additionally, student Maggie McDonald (C'19) was a virtual delegate that took to social media to engage her peers in the presidential election. Coordinator of Student Programs Michelle Howell serves as a Faculty Fellow.
- **National Research:** Like many universities, we participate in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) and the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) research collection and actively use those results to grow our political engagement on campus.
- **Inter-political Council (IPC):** This committee was formed to streamline communication between organizations involved in political engagement on campus. This committee includes a representative from the following organizations/offices/departments: the Sewanee Republicans, Sewanee Democrats, Sewanee Democratic Socialists, No Labels Sewanee, Student Government Association (SGA), the Office of Civic Engagement, and the Politics Department. The point of this organization is to promote cohesion through the Sewanee political organizations and to bring awareness to topics and problems that are going through American culture. We foster a forum for topics, issues, and educational activities between the political groups and advocates on campus. We provide a forum for every group to bring people/pundits to the forum to advocate their ideas while allowing a dissenting opinion/opponent, along with public examination and questioning. This forum is also known as the Bishop's Union - operating as a semi-formal forum for intellectual and educational debate.

¹ "College Debate 16 - About," *College Debate 16*. 8 Nov 2016. < <http://collegedebate16.org/dudebate16/> >

- DebateWatch: In partnership with the Center for Speaking and Listening, Sewanee Democrats, College Republicans, and No Labels Sewanee, we co-hosted four DebateWatch-es including the three presidential debates and the vice presidential debate. The event was held at the Sewanee Inn and included free dinner for participants. We opened the event to students, staff, faculty, and community members and saw nearly 175 individuals - with some individuals returning twice. This does not include “walk-ins” that sat in the back, did not eat dinner, but participated in the discussion. The attendance at events was limited to 50 participants for each DebateWatch. DebateWatch is “a voter education program of the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD). DebateWatch is a great way to get American voters talking about the candidates and issues, not just listening. It brings people together to watch the televised debates, turn off the television as soon as it is over, and then have a discussion about what they have just seen and heard.”² Participants were given a study guide to write notes during the viewing. Afterwards, there was a 30 minute conversation and the use of the app *PollEverywhere* to gauge the opinions of the audience.
- Host Julie Winokur and her film *Bring it to the Table* - “a documentary film, participatory online platform, community engagement campaign + web series aimed at bridging political divides and elevating the national conversation about issues that matter to us all. The project is for those who want to listen to what their fellow students, neighbors, friends, family members, and even total strangers, really think.”³

² “Host a DebateWatch,” *Commission on Presidential Debates*. 8 Nov 2016.

<<http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=debatewatch-overview> >

³ “Bring it to the Table - Home,” *Bring it to the Table*. 8 Nov 2016. < <http://bringit2thetable.org/#home> >