

Election@Bard



Bard College's ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Action Plan
December 15th, 2021

Executive Summary

Background:

Election@Bard is an initiative funded by the Bard Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) and the Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF) that facilitates voter registration, provides non-partisan candidate and election information, and fights for voting rights protection. Bard College and Election@Bard believe that voting is one of the most fundamental rights in a democratic society and we encourage all students to exercise the right to vote.

Since its launch in 2014, Election@Bard has activated its network to go beyond voter registration. Election@Bard hosts candidate meet and greet forums for students, lobbies for voter rights with public officials, raises key issues like gun control and immigration rights, sponsors student leadership conferences and makes civic engagement more accessible to the student body. Election@Bard is playing an active role in working to protect voter rights and polling site accessibility for college-age voters in Dutchess County.

Who developed this plan?

- Erin Cannan, Bard Vice President for Civic Engagement, Sarah deVeer '17, Bard Outreach Coordinator, Sarah Seager '24, 2021 Leader of Election@Bard, Aleks Demetriades '25, Election@Bard Intern.

Who is a part of our coalition?

Election@Bard partners with local non-partisan voter groups, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, and campus partners within the College. Election@Bard also has a strong connection within the college community with the Center for Civic Engagement, Open Society University Network, and others.

Election@Bard Core Team:

- Jonathan Becker -- Bard Executive Vice President, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Executive Advisor to Election@Bard
- Erin Cannan -- Bard Vice President of Student Affairs, Election@Bard Campus Champion
- Sarah deVeer '17 -- Bard Outreach Coordinator, Election@Bard Campus Champion
- Sarah Seager '24 -- 2021 Election@Bard Leader
- Aleks Demetriades - Election@Bard Team Member/Intern
- Volunteers -- Additionally, Election@Bard's work could not be done without the work of dedicated volunteers, who join with us to support mobilization efforts.
- Community partners -- The Andrew Goodman Foundation, Dutchess County Board of Elections
- Campus partners -- The Center for Civic Engagement, The Office of Residence Life, Center for Student Life and Advising, the Athletics Department, The Office of Admission

Commitment:

Election@Bard is an initiative that demonstrates student and faculty commitment to promoting democratic engagement amongst youth voters. While Election@Bard focuses on voter registration, candidate and election information, and protecting voter rights, Bard as a whole is deeply committed to integrating issues related to national and local elections within the curriculum. This commitment is illustrated through a number of courses that are taught and centered on themes of democracy, American government and voter engagement that will be held routinely. Specifically, Jonathan Becker (Executive Vice President and Executive Advisor to Election@Bard) and Erin Cannan (Vice President of Student Affairs and Election@Bard Campus Champion) co-teach classes about civic engagement through Bard's Open Society University Network. Courses relating to voter rights and civic engagement are taught in various departments at Bard.

Landscape:

In 2020, Bard won a lawsuit that had been years in the making to ensure a polling site on campus. This win ensures that students and community members have an accessible place to vote. It is a main priority for Election@Bard to keep this polling site for years to come.

Another polling place sits several miles down a sidewalk-less road at St. John's Church. The 550-square-foot space barely allows enough room for the voting equipment and personnel. Each election day, students and community members alike line up out the door, forced to face cold weather or rain. Additionally, the site isn't accessible by public transport—despite there being a clear preference in election law for sites located along public transportation routes. These conditions create a number of hurdles that keep the local community from fully participating in elections.

Goals:

Short-Term Goals:

- Recruit 3 new people to join the Election@Bard team, who are ideally first years or sophomores.
- Focus most resources on Get-Out-The-Vote and general voter education.

Goals for 2022 Elections - success in these goals will be measured in the NSLVE report:

- Increase voter registration rate from 90% (2020) to 92%
- Raise the rate of voters who are registered from 81 (2020) to 83%

Long-Term Goals:

- Enhance collaboration with CCE and Career Development Office by promoting research/internship opportunities for students who are seeking employment opportunities with government agencies and elected officials.
- Maintain voter registration efforts at first-year and transfer registration.
- Expand Election@Bard's reach to focus on supporting students who are out-of-state voters.

Strategy:

Short Term Goals:

- Host events/programming to build trust between students and Election@Bard
- Continue to table to support students voter registration efforts and ask questions
- Promote weekly office hours for students to ask questions, volunteer, and get civically engaged

Long-term Goals:

- Foster collaboration with OSUN Certificate in Civic Engagement to support students get the necessary volunteer hours needed for the Certificate
 - This can also be built for classes where civic engagement is a requirement.
- Continue to table regularly for voter registration, especially in the weeks leading up to a voter registration deadline and on registration day for first-years and transfer students.
- Hire an intern whose main job is to communicate with out-of-state voters via email, Instagram, etc to remind them of deadlines, support them with requesting absentee ballots, etc