

#Why I Vote
Voter Engagement Campaign 2024
Chatham University

Executive Summary

Chatham University's ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Plan was developed by the Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics (PCWP) at Chatham University, the Office of Student Engagement, and the Office of Student Affairs (OSA). The plan was developed to educate Chatham University students and community members in civic learning and to facilitate democratic engagement and participation.

Our voter engagement plan will be implemented across Chatham University's three campuses. In-person activities will be staged at the University's main campus, where most of the undergraduate population is based. However, we will offer virtual and hybrid resources as a way to reach and accommodate more students (e.g. commuter students, graduate students).

The goal of our voter engagement plan is to increase voter engagement for the 2024 election and beyond. We aim to increase voter registration as well as voter turnout on campus. The slogan of this campaign, #Why I Vote, will be branded on all efforts of the campaign including giveaway items and promotional materials. Throughout this campaign, we plan to foster greater awareness of the importance of engaging in our country's democratic processes. Widespread engagement by students, faculty, and staff will generate an increase in awareness, dialogue, and action around the election. In order to achieve this goal, we will implement a series of educational programs and civic engagement events designed to provide voter education, voter registration, and ballot access. This campaign will launch at the beginning of the Fall 2024 semester and conclude with post-election programs. However, efforts to continue to foster democratic engagement on campus will be ongoing throughout the academic year as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has an election every spring (primary election) and every fall (general election). While we are maintaining many of the successful programs and campaigns from previous years, we are augmenting them with new opportunities.

The plan will be led by Dr. Dana Brown, Executive Director of the PCWP with collaboration from offices across the university. The plan has been honed through years of experience reaching out to the diverse audiences in the Chatham University community. We have used NSLVE data, formal and informal feedback, and a variety of methods to reach out to as much of our community as possible.

Leadership

Dr. Dana Brown, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics and Assistant Professor of Political Science

Bill Campbell, Vice President of Marketing and Communications

Dr. Christopher Purcell, Dean of Students and Vice President of Student Affairs, Office of Student Affairs

Danielle Pais Kovacs, Assistant Director of Athletics

Dr. Kristin Dukes, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Dr. Jennie Sweet-Cushman, Associate Professor of Political Science

Student leaders will be recruited at the beginning of the school year and draw from **Chatham Student Government (CSG)**, **College Democrats**, **Young Republicans**, student employees of the PCWP and members of the **Chatham Activity Board (CAB)**.

This leadership team brings together expertise from across campus. The PCWP will provide educational guidance on election rules, important election dates, as well as voter engagement programming. The Office of Student Affairs will help increase our direct communication with the student body by reaching students in the resident halls, classrooms, and on campus through digital means and traditional fliers. They will also help us engage student leaders including Resident Assistants, Members of Chatham Student Government (CSG), and members of the Chatham Activity Board (CAB). We have established relationships with student organizations such as the Young Republicans, College Democrats, Black Student Union, and Chatham Student Power. Each member of the leadership team will help us disseminate election information and voter registration resources. The leadership team will continue to work across campuses and with university partners in order to implement our engagement programs. We will partner with Dr. Rhonda Phillips, President of Chatham University, and the Office of Marketing & Communications to communicate with the entire campus community of current students, faculty and staff, alumni, and friends of Chatham University. Through electronic communications sent by the Office of the President and the Office of Marketing & Communications, we can reach this diverse group and demonstrate Chatham University's commitment to civic engagement and voter participation. We will continue to work with the Office of Residence Life to hang voter information bulletin boards and door hangers in the residence halls. The leadership team will be ongoing through Academic Year 2024 - 2025 and beyond and consist of the staff and representatives of the aforementioned offices. Should personnel leave the institution, what will remain constant are the offices involved in developing and implementing programming.

The PCWP also works with organizations such as Project Pericles, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, and Campus Voter Project to develop and support civic learning and engagement opportunities on campus. These organizations have allowed the PCWP to bring new programs to campus, reach new audiences, and brainstorm ways to increase our outreach throughout the Chatham University community.

The PCWP is in contact with the Allegheny County Office of Elections to ensure that we are sharing correct information with students about registering with their resident hall or campus address, and how to vote on campus. We also regularly assist students who prefer to vote at their permanent address and help them contact their home county's Department of Elections on absentee ballots and mail-in ballots.

Commitment

Chatham University is a dynamic, evolving institution located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, continuing a tradition of community engagement beginning with its founding in 1869 as the Pennsylvania Female College. Today, the University maintains a historical commitment to women's education even as we have transitioned into a co-educational institution. At the core of our mission is serving our communities and graduating engaged citizens.

Chatham University "prepares its students to build lives of purpose, value, and fulfilling work." Further, "Chatham prepares its graduates to be informed and engaged citizens in their communities; to recognize and respect diversity of culture, identity, and opinion; and to live sustainably." Chatham's mission creates an expectation for all students, and the university community, to collaboratively address issues of public concern on local and global levels.

Chatham University's commitment to democratic engagement is demonstrated through the following actions:

- Chatham University's General Education curriculum provides courses that immerse students in Chatham's mission initiatives: Engagement and Responsibility, Sustainability and the Environment, and International and Global Understanding.
 - Students are required to take at least one mission-related course that is dedicated to Engagement and Responsibility (EGE). In an "EGE" course, "students will describe constructions of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and beliefs as they apply to the topic(s) under study. Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for their own positions through such strategies as attentiveness to the ideas and struggles of others, strong communication skills, and consensus."
- Voter registration and voter education materials will be sent to all SDE 101 classes, which is required course for all first-year students.
- Voter registration and education materials will be featured as "Mission Highlights" in the University's *PULSE* Newsletters to community members both inside and outside the University. The newsletters will coincide with important election-related dates (registration deadline, application for mail-in and absentee ballot deadline, and Election Day itself).
- An email from the President of the University will be sent out to all campus community members on National Voter Registration Day to encourage voter registration and draw attention to important election dates.
- Push notifications regarding voter registration deadlines and Election Day will be sent using the Chatham University app
- Chatham University is a proud member of Project Pericles, which is a select group of liberal arts colleges and universities that have made institutional commitments to promoting participatory citizenship and social responsibility within their students. Chatham's commitment is anchored within a committee of the Board of Trustees.

Landscape

Chatham University has an enrollment of nearly 2,400 students across over 60 undergraduate and graduate programs in our areas of excellence: sustainability & health, business & communications, and the arts and sciences.

The Chatham University student body is comprised of approximately 1500 undergraduate students and 900 graduate students. 64.2 percent of full-time students have permanent residency in-state. 78.6 percent of full-time students are female. 20.2 percent of full-time undergraduate students are student-athletes.

Racial/Ethnic Diversity

- 71.6 percent of full-time students identify as white, non-Hispanic.
- 9.4 percent of full-time students identify as Black or African American
- 3.2 percent of full-time students identify as Hispanic/Latino
- 2.4 percent of full-time students identify as Asian

Campus Political Climate

Past campus democratic engagement efforts have closely followed presidential election cycles. Political engagement with electoral politics and voter education tends to increase in presidential and midterm election years and falls in local election years. Students on Chatham University's campus are highly engaged with political issues such as climate change, abortion access, and LGBTQ+ rights. Therefore, to encourage democratic engagement on campus, we will draw upon the connection between students' public policy interests and their democratic participation. We will ask students to share "Why I Vote" and ask them to speak out on social media and on campus about why they choose to vote and why it is important to them.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has implemented a "no excuse mail-in ballot" opportunity. So, in addition to educating around voting in-person on Election Day, we have created communications and informational sessions to teach about how to request a mail-in ballot and how to properly vote with a mail-in ballot. As a part of our efforts, we are offering shuttles to the City-County building so students can turn in their mail-in ballot in person before Election Day.

Goals

Through our voter engagement campaign, we hope to achieve both measureable and immeasurable goals. In the long-term, we strive for 100% student voter participation and to ensure that every student on campus is asked if they are registered to vote and asked to make a voting plan.

Short Term Goals:

1. Encourage students to be active participants in our democracy by fostering civic learning and knowledge in democratic processes.
2. Reach every first-year student in SDE 101 with voter education materials and resources.
3. Reach out to all athletic coaches and staff -- ask them to share voter education materials with their teams.
4. Encourage more students to be engaged in local and national elections. Share passive informational campaigns at high traffic areas on campus such as the cafeteria, student lounge and resident halls.
5. Demonstrate that the percentage of students at Chatham University who are registered voters and who have voted in local and national elections has increased and remains above the national average. Data provided by NSLVE should help us to determine this.

NSLVE Data

In 2020, NSLVE data shows us that Chatham University voting rate was higher than the national average with an 86.0% voting rate among registered students and overall voting rate of 76.0%. Our 2020 data also showed that 88.4% of eligible students were registered, an improvement over our registration rates in 2018 and 2016. In 2020 73% of 18-21-year-old students voted and 72% of 22-24-year-old students voted. The voting rate remained stable among students in their twenties, then sharply increased for students over 30. Additionally, in 2020, we saw increasing voting rates from students further into their college careers. 66% of First-year students voted, 73% of second-year students voted, and 75% of upper level students voted. In 2020, 77% of women students voted while 65.0% of men students voted.

The NSVLE Data reinforces our goals to reach first-year students as they enter the University and ask them to register to vote and participate in the democratic process. Younger students and first year Chatham University students were less likely to vote in 2020 and therefore we must focus our attention in part on this demographic so that we can foster democratic participation throughout each students' college career. We continue to see a gap between our voting rates among women and men students, which is not specific to Chatham University. There has been a gender in voter registration, voter turnout, and vote choice between men and women since 1980. While both groups voting rates increased from 2016 to 2020, the difference between the male vote and female vote remained consistent. In 2024, we will continue to make voter registration available to all at Chatham University.

Strategy

The Office of Student Affairs and the Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics have partnered to implement a campaign to increase voter engagement for the 2024 election and beyond. The slogan of this campaign, #Why I Vote, will be branded on all efforts of the campaign including giveaway items and promotional materials.

As part of our efforts to become a Voter Friendly designated campus, we have signed on to be a part of the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) so that we can track our student registration and voting rates. We have also agreed to be a partner for National Voter Registration Day which we plan to promote on campus. In addition, we've committed to meet the requirements of the American Democracy Project's ALL IN Challenge. We hope to enrich our voter engagement campaign through the support and guidance of these various endeavors.

Action Plan

Pre-Election Day Events

- **Monday, August 26th to the Voter Registration Deadline we will have weekly Voter Registration Tabling:** We will be utilizing different tabling and promotional materials during this time to register students and remind them of the deadline to be registered to vote before the general election.
 - o **Example of tabling include:** A "Barbie" themed giveaway identifying why "This Barbie votes because...", "This Ken votes because...", and "This Allan votes because..." as well as "I vote because" signs.

- **Monday, August 26th, Women's Equality Day:** Voter registration tables will be available in the Student Lounge. In honor of the Women's Equality Day we will offer snacks, games, and other civic engagement resources. Additionally, we use this occasion to send out a mailing to all students on campus about the PCWP.
- **Tuesday August 27th – Tuesday, December 3rd, Hot Takes Tuesday:** Each Tuesday, the PCWP will sit down with students informally to discuss current events, politics, and the election. These will be student-led conversations that allow students to share their thoughts and ask questions.
- **Monday, September 9th, Absentee Ballots Info Session:** An informational session will be held to provide all students from outside of the local area with the process of receiving an absentee ballot. Students are welcome and encouraged to reach out to the PCWP with voter registration or civic engagement questions at any time.
- **Tuesday, September 17th, Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day:** The PCWP will celebrate Constitution Day by giving out pocket constitutions, hosting voter registration, and other educational initiatives. The President of Chatham University will send a campus wide message regarding National Voter Registration Day & Constitution Day.
- **TBA Debate Watch Party:** Debate watch parties will be held in student centers and residence halls on campus. We encourage participation by providing snacks and help students follow along by playing bingo with cards to mark off expected topics of the debate.
- **TBA First Year Experience Course SDE Sessions:** All first year students at Chatham are required to take a first year experience course. Students will discuss civic engagement and participation in elections. Students will also be provided with information about where to vote on Election Day during this session. The information will be shared asynchronously with a pre-recorded video by the Executive Director of the PCWP.
- **Monday, October 21, Voter Registration Deadline, Donut and Cider Table:** To draw attention to the PA Voter Registration Deadline, the PCWP will be handing out free donuts and apple cider on Chatham University's Quad.
- **Tuesday, October 29th, Last Day to Request an Absentee or Mail-In Ballot in PA:** To draw attention to the deadline, the PCWP will table with swag and other free giveaways on the Chatham University Quad or cafeteria.
- **TBA Diversity Dialogue: Dialogue Across Political Differences:** PCWP, CSG, and ODEI will partner to teach students critical listening and communication skills to facilitate productive political conversations across ideological divides.

Election Day Events

- **Tuesday, November 5th, Election Day:** We will be turning our student center into Election Headquarters for Election Day. Activities, snacks, and novelties will be offered in the student center all day in order to energize the campus about the election. The day will culminate with a virtual election results party in the evening.

Post-Election Day Event

- **Tuesday, November 12th, PCWP Post-Election Panel:** During this event, a panel of experts will discuss what happened on election night and what it will mean for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States moving forward. The panel will take questions from the audience and pay special attention to the role of student voters.

Additional Campaign Initiatives

- **Social Media Campaign:** A social media campaign will be utilized during the months leading up to the election. Students will be encouraged by the Office of Student Affairs, the PCWP, and a coalition of student organizations, to post videos, pictures, tweets, and statuses to explain why they plan to vote and/or why others should also vote. These posts will be accompanied by #Why I Vote. We will also use our university Instagram account to create “stories” of students explaining why they plan to vote. We’ll also use this media to promote events, voter registration opportunities, and important deadlines.
- **Pledge to Vote Cards:** At all voter registration events and in the period of time between the voter registration deadline and week of the November election we will collect “Pledge to Vote” cards. Students will write down what political issues are most important to them and why they are going to vote. They will be prompted to write down what time and where they plan to vote (or if they plan on mailing their vote) and will provide their own addresses. Before Election Day, we will mail the cards back to each student as a reminder that they are invested in the election and using their votes.
- **Poster Campaign:** A variety of posters will be hung around campus leading up to the election. Topics covered by the posters will include how to register to vote, how to vote, and why you should vote. We also plan to have a series of posters that feature quotes from past and present notable figures about the importance of participating in democratic processes.
- **Residence Hall Bulletin Boards and Door Hangers:** The PCWP will provide all campus RAs with a printed bulletin board poster and door hangers to remind students of upcoming election related deadlines and to encourage students to get help from PCWP staff if they have questions.
- **#Why I Vote Giveaways:** We will be purchasing t-shirts, buttons, stickers, etc. to pass out to students at registration tables and other events to increase excitement about the campaign and upcoming election. These items will also help us to promote the election on campus.

Coalition

The coalition for our campaign primarily consists of professional staff, faculty, and students who work with and for the Office of Student Affairs and the Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics.

- *Office of Student Affairs*
The Office of Student Affairs provides the campus with a variety of programs and initiatives to engage students in our local community and beyond. Such opportunities include but are not limited to the Social Activism Institute, Alternative Spring Break, Chatham Student Government, and monthly service opportunities. Subsequently, all efforts related to our participation in the NASPA Lead initiative are also housed in the Office of Student Affairs.
- *Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics*
The Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics (PCWP) at Chatham University is a non-partisan center devoted to fostering women's public leadership through education, empowerment, and action. The first to focus on women's political involvement in Pennsylvania, the Center integrates disciplinary knowledge, civic education, and coalition building while examining the intersection of women and public policy. The Center conducts candidate and advocacy trainings, offers educational programs in applied politics, and provides timely analysis on women's issues. The Center is also home to the University's membership in Project Pericles – a select group of liberal arts colleges and universities that have made institutional commitments to promoting participatory citizenship and social responsibility.
- *Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*
The Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion strives to promote a campus environment that understands and embraces multiculturalism while increasing individuals' intercultural competence. The office is responsible for leading efforts to build and sustain a diverse and culturally vibrant campus, which promotes student success and retention.
- *Office of Marketing and Communications*
Chatham University's Office of Marketing and Communications will facilitate campus-wide communication, as well as communication with parents, staff, and alumni.
- *Chatham University Student Government*
Chatham's Student Government connects us to campus leaders from all class years and has a common goal of providing voter education and voter resources to the student body.
- *Chatham University College Democrats*
An on campus, student-run organization
- *Chatham University Young Republicans Club*
An on campus, student-run organization
- *Black Student Union*
An on campus, student-run organization

Sample Materials



Figure 1 Example Yard Sign from prior Election.



Figure 2 Social media post

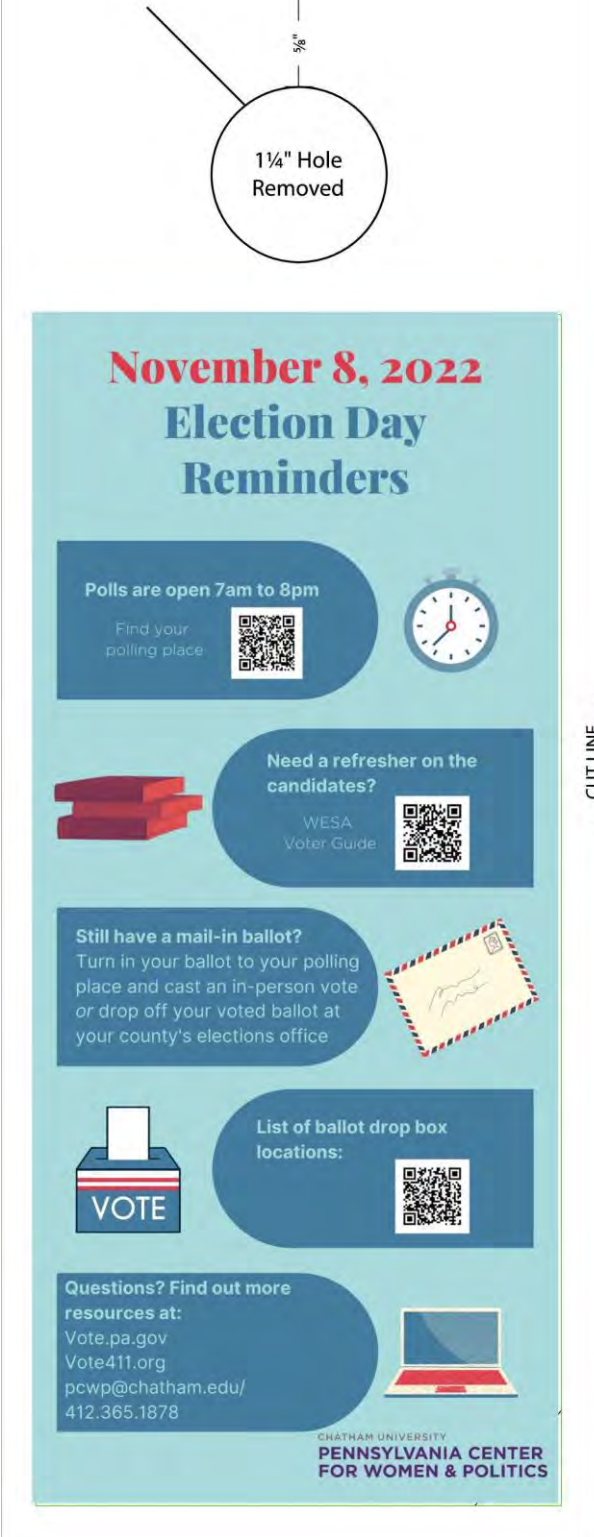


Figure 3 Door Hanger Example

Reporting

The Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics at Chatham University (PCWP) will share our voter engagement plans, data and reports on our website and in emails to the campus and wider community. We will continue to use NSLVE data to share with students Chatham University's voting and registration rates to challenge them to surpass our current rates.

Evaluation

The leadership team will meet in late September 2024 again after the 2024 election to evaluate our efforts and discuss how to implement our voter engagement with increasing success in future years. In the September 2024 meeting, we will evaluate the number of volunteers we have engaged for voter registration as well as the number of participants in the programs that focus on civic engagement. We will also discuss how students are responding voter registration and engagement appeals. This mid-point review process will help us to determine if and where we need to expand our outreach and who to add to the leadership team. This mid-point review opportunity gives us the flexibility to edit our plans. Moving forward we will use NSLVE data, program evaluations, and student feedback to evaluate if we succeeded in engaging more students in the democratic process. Voter engagement and education will be ongoing at Chatham University, and we will use the 2024 evaluation and feedback in our efforts during the 2025 calendar year and beyond.