



**COLLEGE OF SAINT BENEDICT AND SAINT JOHN'S  
UNIVERSITY**

# **VOTER ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

---

FACILITATED BY THE EUGENE J. McCARTHY CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College of Saint Benedict (CSB) and Saint John's University (SJU) Voter Engagement Plan has been developed by the CSB+SJU Votes Coalition at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in partnership with various campus stakeholders.

CSB and SJU are committed to empowering students in global engagement, civic engagement, and citizenship as outlined in its Institutional Learning Goals. The CSB+SJU Votes Coalition was started in 2018 by the Eugene J. McCarthy Center for Public Policy and Civic Engagement. Since its founding in 2006, the McCarthy Center has created venues for constructive, responsible, and interesting civic debate and engagement in community affairs. The McCarthy Center empowers students to be civically engaged leaders on campus locally and globally. The McCarthy Center's mission aligns with the CSB and SJU missions to cultivate the habit of promoting the common good through an integrative environment for learning. We promote the value of politics, our shared identity as citizens, and an engagement in public work.

Students working with the Eugene J. McCarthy Center established a new voting-focused coalition in 2018. CSB+SJU Votes is a collaborative coalition with a united, non-partisan goal to increase student voter participation. This student-led coalition provides resources for CSB+SJU students on voter registration, where to vote on campus, and absentee voting, and promotes overall civic engagement in our community. CSB+SJU Votes also encourages students who are not eligible to vote to utilize the powerful role they play in shaping voter turnout.

CSB+SJU Votes intends to initiate an on-campus public awareness campaign shortly after the start of the 2024-2025 academic year. This public awareness campaign will include informational posters highlighting various events aimed at informing and engaging eligible voters about the candidates and issues pertinent to their voting decisions. CSB+SJU Votes will actively seek to foster student involvement, and perhaps even run, discussions about the upcoming elections and why students need to vote and make their voice heard.

This plan serves as a review of CSB+SJU Votes to date and to communicate goals for 2024 and beyond for the CSB+SJU Votes, leadership with the Eugene J. McCarthy Center, and the overall community of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. We have the following goals for the 2024- 2025 election cycle:

1. Register 90% of eligible CSB+SJU students.
2. Increase student turnout rate on both campuses to over 85%.

3. Deliver effective non-partisan events and programming to the CSB+SJU student body to develop voter literacy through holistic social media and physical guides for all – national, state, and local candidates.
4. Promote alternative approaches to same-day voting by assisting with absentee voting, mail-in voting, early voting, and transportation to voting locations with campus stakeholders to assist students with the registration process.
5. Engage students not eligible to vote with meaningful volunteer opportunities with the Coalition and local stakeholders to provide access to all students interested in civic engagement.

The action plan began in the Spring of the 2021-2022 academic year and will continue through the 2024 elections. This plan will be implemented through leadership and members of the 2024-2025 Votes Coalition and evolve to best accommodate the goals of the Votes Coalition.

*From “Bread Night” talks in the dorms to “Democracy Dogs” at the bus stops, the CSB+SJU Votes coalition is created by students, for students.*

## **BUILDING ON 2020 and 2022**

The CSB+SJU Votes coalition began as a nonpartisan push for student participation in the 2018 Midterm Election, and in that year, we had a record-breaking turnout. The 2020 General Election expanded on the momentum from 2018 and established the CSB+SJU Votes coalition as a real difference-maker when it came to voting on campus. This year, we are working to build on efforts from 2020 and 2022, developing a plan to continue growing and encouraging student voting participation.

## **CSB+SJU VOTE COALITION MISSION STATEMENT**

To develop a collaborative, campus-wide initiative that will provide a programmatic approach to foster the importance of civic engagement, specifically voting, among students at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University.

To promote students’ beliefs about the importance of voting and to bring a spirit of celebration to civic engagement.

To educate students on how to register to vote, where to register to vote, and why registering to vote is so important. To educate students who may not be eligible to vote on how to utilize the powerful role they also play in shaping voter turnout in our community.

To offer resources for students about the candidates and issues that will appear on the ballot, as well as performing student opinion polls.

# LEADERSHIP

The Eugene J. McCarthy Center for Public Policy and Civic Engagement leads the CSB/SJU Votes Coalition through dynamic partnerships and teamwork with Student Development, Academic Affairs, Athletics, Campus Ministry, and other partnerships. If these partners are absent or unable to assist in the execution of this engagement plan, leadership/coordination would fall to the student coordinator of CSB+SJU Votes as well as students in various leadership roles within the McCarthy Center and elsewhere, as this is a student first initiative, to ensure that this plan is successfully executed and followed through with.

# COALITION MEMBERS

Coalition members include at least two students representing the following organizations and clubs at CSB+SJU. As CSB+SJU Votes reaches more students, faculty, and staff, we have seen more student volunteers within the clubs and organizations commit to the mission and beyond. Increasing involvement in the coalition throughout CSB/SJU is a major goal of CSB/SJU Votes. At the start of 2024, invitations will be emailed to campus clubs and organizations inviting new coalition members to participate.

Current members include the Eugene J. McCarthy Center for Public Policy and Civic Engagement, Saint Ben’s Senate, Saint John’s Senate, United Politics, College Republicans, College Democrats, the Sister Nancy Hynes Institute for Women’s Leadership, the Men’s Development Institute, the Bonner Leader Program, Climate Justice Club, and Exploring Latin American Cultures, International Affairs Club, and the Political Science Club.



For the 2022 Midterm Election, CSB/SJU Votes worked with the following clubs, organizations, and institutions: CSB and SJU Deans of Student Offices, CSB and SJU Athletics, CSB and SJU Residential Life, the Indigenous Student Association, Hmong Americans Involving Students, Alpha Kappa Sigma Service Sorority, Bennies in Business, Climate Justice Club, Chess Club, Campus DJs, Crew, Club Sports, Speech and Debate Club, Enactus, St. Jude at CSB/SJU, Special Olympics, Students Demand Action, Students for Life, The Record, Advocates for Inclusive Mentoring, Buzzed, CERTS, CSBeats, Johnnie Blend, Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, Extending the Link, First- Generation Organization, Outdoor University, Peer Resource Program, QPLUS, and more.

## COMMITMENT

As outlined by the Office of Academic Assessment and Effectiveness at CSB and SJU, every department utilizes the institutional goals to encourage students to think deeply, embrace difference, engage globally, serve graciously, and live courageously. In developing the 2024 Voter Engagement Campus plan and goals with both CSB+SJU Votes and the Eugene J. McCarthy Center, these institutional goals were used as a guide.

Our students commit to global engagement, civic engagement, and citizenship with the institutional goal of engaging globally. These skills include understanding justice and the common good, awareness of social responsibility, and knowledge of world systems and their points of intersection/divergence. The CSB and SJU learning experience will allow students to reflect on their place in the world, experience different cultures, and practice social responsibility and leadership locally and globally.’

CSB+SJU is committed to providing students with non-partisan, educational tools to help students make the most informed decision possible when they cast their vote. Throughout their educational experience at CSB+SJU, students are educated through various classes and common core requirements on how to be a responsible and educated voter. Voting, and being a responsible voter, requires, and inspires, leadership, civic engagement, and even a desire to work to better our society. These qualities are refined in the classroom at CSB+SJU and students emerge as stronger leaders, and with a more confident view of how their attitude can impact the CSB+SJU community.

Student leaders with CSB+SJU Votes will be securing the ALL IN Challenge Presidential Commitment at the start of the 2024-25 academic year and will continue our partnership with Civic Nation in Washington, D.C., and MIAC Votes in Minnesota.

# LANDSCAPE

With the support of the student polling team within the Eugene J. McCarthy Center, a detailed landscape of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University as related to civic learning, civic engagement, voter participation, and political climate is being developed.

During the presidential primary elections in early 2020, the polling team surveyed 227 student responses related to the primary election and political affiliation. The polling team was created in 2018 and has conducted seven student surveys so far on a variety of policy-related issues from freedom of speech to abortion. Future polls will be created and analyzed for a fuller landscape for future voter engagement campus plans.

# NSLVE DATA

## National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement

The College of Saint Benedict

Saint John's University

84.8%

81.5%

Per NSLVE data, 84.8% of students from the College of Saint Benedict and 81.5% of students from Saint John's University voted in the 2020 general election.



	College of Saint Benedict	Saint John's University
2016 Registration Rate	91.8%	85.7%
2018 Registration Rate	87.5%	84.5%
2020 Registration Rate	92.2%	91.8%
2016 Voting Rate	81.3%	70.8%
2020 Voting Rate	84.8%	81.5%



# GOALS

## Short Term Goals (2024 Elections)

Building on the establishment of CSB/SJU Votes in 2018 and the success in both 2018 and 2020, the short-term student voter engagement goals center around keeping that momentum going and creating a campus culture of civic engagement. These goals were created using data from both the 2018 Midterm Elections and 2020 General Elections.

**Register more than 90% of eligible CSB and SJU students.**

**Increase student turnout rate on both campuses to 85%.**

**Deliver effective non-partisan events and programming to the CSB+SJU student body to develop voter literacy, through wholistic social media and physical guides for all – national, state, and local – candidates.**

**Promote alternative approaches to same-day voting, by assisting with absentee voting, mail-in voting, early voting, and transportation to voting locations with campus stakeholders to assist students with the registration process.**

**Engage students who are not eligible to vote with meaningful volunteer opportunities with the Coalition and local stakeholders to provide access to all students interested in civic engagement.**

## Long Term Goals (beyond the 2024 Elections)

As CSB/SJU Votes, the Eugene J. McCarthy Center, and the greater CSB and SJU community continue to create a culture of voter engagement, the long-term goal is to continue the next generation of civically engaged citizens. Our long-term goal is to have 95% of eligible CSB and SJU students vote by 2030 by making voting and overall civic engagement a core value of each CSB and SJU student from the time they accept admission to CSB and SJU and beyond graduation.

# STRATEGY

**In order to meet the 2024 Student Voter Engagement Goals, CSB/SJU Votes will focus on strategies in the following areas:**

## **Increasing Campus Awareness**

**As a relatively new initiative, it is important to continue to bring attention to CSB+SJU Votes across both campuses and the CSB+SJU community.**

**One way that this could be done is by providing informational videos from various individuals saying why it is important to vote and why they think it is important to vote.**

**Ensuring that events are properly advertised, that programming is done regularly, and that students are constantly aware of what is happening on campus regarding election-related events/programming.**

## **Voter Registration**

**CSB+SJU Votes will encourage voter registration to be an ongoing opportunity beyond National Voter Registration Day.**

**CSB+SJU Votes will consistently encourage and advertise registering to vote, by providing a QR code around campus that students can scan that will take them to an informational video on how to register to vote in the state of Minnesota.**

**CSB+SJU Votes will make sure that we staff a tables in common areas around campus to help ensure that students who need assistance in registering to vote can be helped.**

## Voter Education

**CSB+SJU Votes will continue to provide resources and opportunities for student voter education.**

**CSB+SJU Votes will offer educational programming, in the form of discussions, presentations, and more, to help further educate the students at CSB+SJU on who/what they will be voting for in November.**

## Voter Participation

**CSB+SJU Votes will continue to empower students to vote in the 2024 Elections.**

**CSB+SJU Votes will continue to encourage students to vote, in the 2024 elections and beyond.**

**CSB+SJU Votes will encourage voters to make their voices heard and to vote, as it is important for voters to be informed and engaged, in this process.**

# REPORTING

**CSB+SJU Votes commits to allowing/providing full transparency in releasing/reporting the results of the *All In Campus Democracy Challenge*. Ways that CSB+SJU could provide this information to the student body include:**

1. Sending out a schoolwide email containing the *All In* report, once the results have been sent to the McCarthy Center.
2. Posting a QR Code around campus so that anyone who is on campus that would like access to this report, will have access to it.
3. Publish a page on the CSB+SJU website containing the information given in the report, so that it is easily accessible by anyone who wishes to view it.
4. Printing off multiple paper copies of the report that will be available in the McCarthy Center for those who wish to view a physical copy of the report.

# EVALUATION

We will employ the following strategies to measure a successful plan:

## **Increasing Voting Rate**

- Monitor Fall program participation.
- Connect with the Center for Student Leadership and Engagement to assess Fall programming attendance totals.
- Deliver a survey to students to gauge success, gather critical feedback, and record party affiliation.
- Ensure group sponsored programming receives bipartisan support by connecting with campus organizations and both College Democrats and College Republicans.

## **Timeline**

- Survey student knowledge of deadlines and programming with the use of an Exit Survey.

## **Voter Guide**

- Manually record what percentage of physical voter guides are used
- Track virtual engagement with voter guide and cross reference with followers and average engagement rates
- Finalize the number of groups impacted.

## **Strategy**

- Poll classes on the quality of programming using forms manager.
- Use the feedback to improve future programming.
- Orally assess strategy with Administration, local community members and organizations, and politicians to determine the effectiveness of engagement.

# APPENDIX

## January – August

- Recruit new members and hire a CSB+SJU Coordinator
- Update Campus Voter Guide
- Update the website with key dates, resources, and programming opportunities
- Confirm campus organizations and clubs' sponsorship of events
- Arrange drop in vote encouragement pitch dates with Political Science Faculty
- Develop tabling opportunities to increase voting turnout with New Student Orientation

## September - November

- Promote voting through in-person programming
- Promote voting on social media
- Observe/promote “Vote Early” day
- Collaborate with the Political Science Department to host debate watch parties
- Table each week to promote voter registration, voting, and alternative civic engagement
- Distribute Voter Guide with physical copies, virtual versions, and in The Record
- Shuttles on election day