



COLLEGE OF THE
Holy Cross

ALL IN Campus
Democracy
Challenge

2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

**College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, Massachusetts**

Executive Summary

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts for the 2024 election cycle. The purpose of this action plan is to promote democratic engagement by implementing strategies and educational programs designed to increase student voter registration and turnout in the 2024 election specifically, but also to lay a foundation to cultivate interest in civic engagement generally.

Our strategy, described in detail below, relies on what we have learned from past voting data from NSLVE and previous campus elections-related efforts. Broadly, this plan describes both short-term and long-term initiatives that fall into three categories: 1) voter engagement; 2) dialogue education; and 3) democracy and pedagogy. It is a strategy that has been in the making for several years and the success of which has been largely a result of extensive cross-campus collaboration.

This particular action plan was developed by Caitlin MacNeil '13, Associate Director of Student Involvement, and Michelle Bata, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Student Engagement, in collaboration with faculty, staff, and students members of the Holy Cross Elections Forum, members of the Student Government Association, and members of our newest peer educator group, SPEECH (Students Promoting Expression, Empathy, and Civic Harmony). The activities described in this action plan represent our collective and collaborative efforts to promote democracy, civic engagement, voter participation, and dialogue on campus this academic year.

Leadership

Chairing our voter engagement efforts is Caitlin MacNeil, Associate Director of Student Involvement. Her work is supported by many across campus, including Athletics, Government

and Community Relations, the Student Government Association, and our SPEECH peer educators.

Our voter engagement efforts are part of a broader, shorter-term set of initiatives designed to bring the campus community into conversation around elections-related topics. These efforts are led by members of the Holy Cross Elections Forum, a campuswide leadership team that includes the following stakeholders:

- Caitlin MacNeil - Associate Director of Student Involvement
- Michelle Bata - Associate Dean for Student Engagement
- Sarah Potter - Assistant Director, McFarland Center for Religion, Ethics, & Culture
- Daniel Klinghard - Dean of Education and Academic Experience
- Thomas Landy - Director of the McFarland Center of Religion, Ethics, & Culture
- Casey Denis - Assistant Director for Justice, Equity, Belonging, and Identity
- Aaron Dashiell - Assistant Director for Student-Athlete Development
- Sue Hunt - Director of Government & Community Relations
- Marybeth Kearns-Barrett, Director of College Chaplain's Office
- Claire Wolf '25 - Student Government Association Co-President
- Benjamin Frazone '26 - Student Government Speaker of the Senate/ SPEECH Peer Educator
- Katherine Russell '26 - Student Athlete Representative

Commitment

The College of the Holy Cross commitment to civic engagement is rooted in our Jesuit, Catholic mission. The Holy Cross mission asks for its community members to “build a community marked by freedom, mutual respect, and civility”. A critical piece to creating this campus environment is our commitment to constructive dialogue, which “requires us to remain open to that sense of the whole which calls us to transcend ourselves and challenges us to seek that which might constitute our common humanity”. Our Jesuit, Catholic tradition calls on us to engage in democratic processes as part of the call to live our shared mission. Voting, the writings of St. Ignatius (the founder of the Jesuit order) suggests, is an act of love when a ballot is cast in support of social justice and to improve the lives of the marginalized.

In preparation for the 2024 national election, the Holy Cross Elections Forum has come together to organize a vibrant calendar of events that provide the campus with opportunities for dialogue, information literacy, issue engagement, and elections-based commentary and analysis. The goal is to engage the campus community in important conversations about the elections and related topics in ways that showcase various perspectives and model working through differences thoughtfully, without ignoring challenges. The Elections Forum is activated in an elections year to provide campus programming and voter engagement opportunities.

As part of longer-term, capacity-building efforts the Democratic Futures Forum represents a group of faculty and staff who collaborate on programming designed to build trust in democracy among students. Its focus is on issues currently challenging American democracy, but its distinctive contribution is to build and disseminate pedagogical approaches for strengthening students' capacities as democratic citizens. The Democratic Futures Forum is sponsored by Academic Affairs and the McFarland Center, and includes faculty from Political Science, Anthropology, Religious Studies, Russian Studies, Classics, English, and History.

Co-curricular life at Holy Cross further reflects our commitment to nonpartisan democratic engagement. The Student Government Association, the governing body for all Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs), is an elected body of student leaders who represent their peers on campus. This teaches students the value of participating in democratic processes at a local level, including our on campus community. RSOs and other campus organizations focus their efforts on engagement in local and national communities, including philanthropic groups and volunteer organizations. The College has a recognized College Democrats and College Republicans organizations, groups of which can promote the ideals of a particular political party. These two groups often co-sponsor events to promote a bipartisan approach to politics and allow for students to engage in more depth across political beliefs. One of the College's Peer Education groups SPEECH, which stands for Students Promoting Expression, Empathy, and Civic Harmony, promotes healthy dialogue across differences and has held many events that engage in topics related to democratic engagement.

The College is committed to communicating these democratic efforts with the entire campus community and have implemented various marketing strategies to do so. Campuswide elections email newsletters are sent out weekly. Content from the elections newsletters have included instructions for voter registration and registration deadlines, programming, and information on informed voting. Campus community members are able to review resources around democratic engagement and voting on our campus intranet. Faculty, staff, and administrators also are provided communication about nonpartisan engagement efforts at the staff information sessions, provided to the campus community on a quarterly basis.

Additional commitments include:

- President Rougeau has signed the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.
- Athletic coaches at our institution have been involved in our nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts by signing the ALL IN Coaches Voter Engagement Pledge in years past and we are continuing these efforts to have coaches involved in 2024.
- Holy Cross continues to work with NSLVE by regularly providing our data for analysis. Our NSLVE authorization runs through 2033.
- Holy Cross continues to use TurboVote to encourage voter participation.

Landscape

The College of the Holy Cross registers approximately 3200 undergraduate students, of which 38% are from Massachusetts, 59% are from out-of-state, and 3% are International students. 47 U.S. states, territories, and the District of Columbia are represented, as are 27 countries. Over time, we have seen an increase in enrolled international students who are not eligible to vote.

We rely heavily on the NSLVE reports to help us understand our students' voting behavior and to help craft a voter engagement strategy. Additionally, we take into consideration the changing demographic profile of our student body over time. For example, as we continue to draw from states outside of New England, we make sure that we are communicating voter registration and absentee voting deadlines in states that reflect our student body. Also, as we have a significant number of students living locally but off-campus (approximately 300 students), the SGA sponsors buses on Election Day to support in person voting. We also have a number of students studying abroad/away in the fall semester (approximately 150 students), so we send out specially crafted messages to those populations with the information they need to vote by absentee ballot.

Goals

From past NSLVE reports, we know that our campus generally has higher campus voter registration and voting rates during presidential election cycles. For example, in 2020, our campus voting rate was 83.1%, but in 2022, our voting rate was 20.4%. In 2021, our institution was recognized by ALL IN for the 2020 election as the Champion Award Most Improved Voting Rate. We have also been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals of recognition for past elections: 2018 Silver, 2020 Platinum, 2022 Bronze.

Our institution's nonpartisan democratic engagement *short-term* goals for the 2024 election cycle are:

- Increase the registration rate of eligible student voters to 95%
- Increase the registered student voting rate to 95%
- Increase the voting rate of all eligible students to 90%

Our *long-term* goals for future election cycles include:

- Increasing the voter registration and voting rates to 50% in non-presidential election years.
- Adding voter registration to new student orientation.
- Integrating TurboVote into myHC, our campuswide student engagement platform.

Strategy

The College of the Holy Cross has or will implement the following strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation:

Voter Registration

National Voter Registration Day - 9/17/24

- Student organizations across campus collaborated to increase voter registration among students. Holy Cross's Student Government Association, as well as a peer educator group hosted tables in the campus center with information about TurboVote. TurboVote is the choice platform for Holy Cross in regards to voter status and voter registration. Students were prompted to write "why do you vote" on a whiteboard and were posted on Holy Cross social media pages. Additionally, there were decorations such as balloons placed around the campus center to draw attention to the tables that were conducting voter registration programming.

TurboVote - Fall 2024

- Holy Cross continues to use TurboVote as our primary tool through which students are encouraged to register for reminders and for assistance with voter registration and absentee ballots.

#AskEveryStudent Challenge - October 2024

- As part of the #AskEveryStudent challenge, we are sending personalized emails to all students (except those with international status) which contain information about voter registration in their state, how to register to vote, how to request an absentee ballot, and notification about their state deadlines.

Voter Registration Print/Mailing Station - October 2024

- As part of our marketing and tabling voter registration efforts, student volunteers will be staffing a print and mail station so students can print voter registration forms and absentee ballot request forms and mail them at no charge, further reducing access barriers to voting.

Voter engagement efforts are supported by a number of offices and student groups on campus, including the Office of Student Involvement, Government and Community Relations, Athletics, the Student Government Association, SPEECH Peer Educators, Men of Color Athletes (MOCA), Women of Color Athletes (WOCA), and the Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC).

Voter Education

Online Resources

- We have been curating an information hub of events, resources, and information related to voting and the elections for students and the wider community on our new campus intranet
- The HC Libraries has developed a Guide to Voter Registration and Education resource for students and faculty
- The McFarland Center for Religion, Ethics, and Culture has updated their elections resource playlist to serve as a resource for faculty and academic courses
- We are in the process of developing an externally facing site to promote and describe these efforts to outside audiences

Disability Awareness Day - 10/1/24

- Holy Cross hosted a Disability Awareness Day. Information was collected in regards to voter rights for people with intellectual and physical disabilities. The information was specific to the state of Massachusetts, but there were QR codes and links provided for voter rights in other states. The material was centered around the different accommodations people can access when voting, and outlined the standards for how voting centers need to be accessible to all. The standards and laws surrounding voting rights were placed on marketing materials outside of the campus center so that they were accessible for others to see.

Classroom Presentations - October 2024

- SPEECH Peer Educators created a 10-12 minute presentation to present to classrooms on why it is important to be civically engaged in college and how to use TurboVote to register to vote. Target audience is first-year students in first year course Montserrat, but any faculty member is able to have access to book the Voter Registration classroom presentations.

Residence Hall “Dorm Storms” - October 2024

- The Office of Residence Life & Housing will be asking Resident Assistants to “dorm storm” on the same day in the residence halls to deliver reminders about voting as we approach the national election.

Athletics Promotion & Engagement - full academic year

- As a member of the NCAA and the Patriot League, Holy Cross Athletics follows NCAA civic engagement legislation to increase voting among student-athletes and dedicates Election Day to practice in civic engagement. Holy Cross student athletes volunteer their time and efforts at local polling places in the city of Worcester, MA.
- Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC) promotes vote registration and participation in the Luth Athletic Complex during athletic competitions.

Marketing Strategies - full academic year

- Lawn Signs
 - The College has used marketing materials across campus to promote TurboVote, the College's platform for voter registration status. Campus lawn signs have been put up for the months of September - October 2024 to remind the campus community to register to vote.
- Social Media
 - The Student Government Association and SPEECH Peer Educator Group (Students Promoting Empathy, Expression, and Civic Harmony) posted throughout National Voter Registration Day pictures of students explaining why they personally choose to vote. These pictures were promoted across multiple Instagram accounts, ensuring that as many students saw them as possible.
 - Holy Cross staff is working to revive the "HC Votes" Instagram account, which was last used during the 2020 election.
- Bookmarks
 - Bookmarks were created with voting information for Holy Cross students. These marketing materials have been passed out at different academic events throughout September and October.
 - The bookmarks included specific information about how to use TurboVote, and Holy Cross's voting statistics from past elections.
- Voting Plan Donut Donation
 - This event will take place mid October. Students will be incentivized to talk about their voting plan in exchange for a treat, such as a donut. Students will write down on a piece of paper how they plan to vote. For example, if they are planning to get an absentee ballot, they will indicate that they are aware of that process. They are encouraged to talk about the way in which they are voting, not the candidate they support. Once students make clear their plans for election day, they will receive a donut.

Voting and Ballot Access

- Free shuttles to local polling stations
- Print/mail station to print and mail voter registration and absentee ballots request forms free of charge

Issues Awareness and Information Literacy

- Promoting faculty programming and discussions that focus on elections-related themes and issues

- Supporting student organizations who host events and promoting them through our marketing channels

Dialogue Education

Dialogue Education

- Holy Cross joined the Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI) as an Institutional Member in summer 2023. Institutional membership includes:
 - **Fostering Dialogue Skills in Students** training for faculty and staff interested in creating a dialogue-centered environment for students.
 - **Dialogue Facilitation Certification** training for staff to learn facilitation techniques and intervention strategies
 - Faculty, staff, and student access to **Perspectives**, a research-based blended learning program that uses psychology concepts and interactive scenarios to equip students with the skills for conversation, collaboration, and problem-solving across differences.

Perspectives

- *Perspectives* is a research-validated, interactive e-learning program that is used at institutions across the country to foster meaningful dialogue by introducing practical skills that help promote communication, sense of belonging, and openness to diverse perspectives. All incoming students were expected to complete the modules and, by the start of classes, we achieved a 96% completion rate.

SPEECH Peer Educators

- SPEECH (Students Promoting Expression, Empathy, and Civic Harmony) is a new peer educator group on campus that coordinates and provides developmental programming for students around issues of courageous conversation, dialogue across difference, free speech, freedom of expression, and academic freedom.

Dialogue Dinners

- Spearheaded by the Academic Freedom Caucus, a group of faculty and staff interested in promoting a culture of academic freedom on campus, the Dialogue Dinners series brings together small groups of students to engage in meaningful conversations about important civic topics about which students may have differing opinions and experiences. These conversations take a dialogic approach and are moderated by trained faculty and student facilitators.

Evaluation

The College of the Holy Cross will evaluate our ALL IN action plan in the following ways:

- The College of the Holy Cross will use the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement data to evaluate changes in student voting by comparing our campus voter turnout and voter registration rates to past elections
- We will use TurboVote registration data to share with the campus community to further our campuswide voter education efforts
- The College of the Holy Cross is pursuing interest and an application to participate in the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement in fall 2024. This classification will assist in having access to datasets that will help Holy Cross understand their voting rates and yield as compared to other campuses nationally.
- We will also make use of other metrics, such as attendance tracking, hits on the LibGuide, intranet site analytics, and pulse survey results.

The HC Elections Forum is an appropriate space for discussion of these data to rethink our action plan for future election cycles.

Reporting

The College of the Holy Cross ALL IN Action Plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/college-of-the-holy-cross/>.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our past NSLVE reports, which can also be found on our campus page above.

We will be posting our action plan and NSLVE reports on our internal intranet elections site.