

Voter Mobilization Plan
Goucher College
2020



Updated May 27, 2020

Executive Summary

Stated alongside the mission of Goucher College is the ideal of an education that is “based on an expanding sense of community – a community where discourse is valued and practiced, where students attend small classes and interact closely with faculty and one another, and where students can participate in and lead extracurricular programs.”

This ideal education is the foundation for strong democratic engagement, and when realized, develops responsible citizens who not only are democratically engaged, but who are equipped, “... to solve complex problems together with people who are not like themselves.” Goucher College values developing responsible and engaged global citizens, it is at the heart of what we do.

What follows is an action plan to ensure that Goucher College holds true to its ideals and mission. The plan is narrowly tailored to ensure democratic engagement is practiced, recognized, and valued by the campus community and is not intended to undermine or de-value other aspects of the college’s mission. The action plan, properly implemented, will support and reinforce the core values of the college.

The college as a whole has been considering how better to integrate our graduate and undergraduate programs, the modalities of which are very different. Previous student voting reports issued by NSLVE indicate robust participation amongst our graduate students. In this iteration of our Action Plan for Voter Engagement, there will be an emphasis of being more inclusive of graduate students in our planning.

The impetus for issuing this plan now, is the upcoming presidential elections of November, 2020. While it is always the goal to have active engagement in state and congressional elections, this year in particular there are many issues of interest to students and many policies under consideration that could potentially affect the type of liberal arts education Goucher College offers. We believe raising an awareness and understanding of these issues is not just a civic responsibility, but an educational opportunity that has the likely benefit of increasing voting rates among our students. While we have a specific student voter turnout goal of 70%, we see the voting rate as a proxy measure for student democratic engagement and just one indicator of whether we are reaching our goal of educating responsible and engaged global citizens.

With the global pandemic caused by the coronavirus, we have had to re-think many aspects of our traditional voter mobilization activities. The plans the college is adopting to allow students back onto campus, constrains our abilities to have any social gather of more than 10 individuals. What follows is the best attempt to adapt democratic engagement and voter mobilization practices with social distancing requirements. These adaptations should also serve the dual purpose of reaching our graduate students who have a limited physical presence on campus.

The plan has been developed by Nina Kasniunas, Associate Professor of Political Science. The action plan presented here is intended to take effect July 1, 2020 and will remain in effect through the fall semester of 2020. The plan will be made public by the college, ideally housed

on a webpage dedicated to Goucher College's Voter Engagement. Implementation of the plan will be overseen by Professor Kasniunas. After the fall semester, there will be time to assess implementation and use that feedback to develop a more permanent action plan for democratic engagement that is not tied to voter mobilization efforts around elections. Ideally there will be a standing democratic engagement plan for the campus, with auxiliary voter mobilization plans constructed every two years for federal elections. All of the plans would be submitted to the President of Goucher College and the Board of Trustees for their endorsement.

Goals

1. Expand the group of students on the voter mobilization team to include one student for each identifiable student constituency on campus. It is our intent to fully leverage a peer-to-peer model of voter mobilization.
2. Identify faculty and staff to become members of the institutional oversight board of the voter mobilization efforts every two years.
3. Identify staff of the Welch Center for Professional and Graduate programs to join our voter mobilization efforts and to bridge the gap that currently exists between them and the Undergraduate programs.
4. Register 80% of eligible Goucher students to vote for the 2020 general election.
5. Get 500 voter pledge cards signed by Goucher students for the 2020 general election.
6. Student voter turnout rate of 70%.

Leadership

Nina Kasniunas, Associate Professor in Political Science is leading the efforts outlined in this action plan with the support of the following student working group.

Working Group:

Brett Rapkin-Citrebaum, Lead organizer (graduating May 2020)

Claire Corliss, Lead organizer

Christine Charikofsky, Lead organizer

Greta Elbers

Sierra Hausthor

Steven Van Riper

Sarah Ohana

Dana Kouba

Nora Neely

Mikaela McCray

Corrina Biemer

Will Kelly

Celeste Fazioli

Daniela Harvey

Tung Nguyen

Kiara Kahan

Derek Borowsky

Miriam Ganslmeier

Nadean Sam

Elsa Alexandrin

Tess Landon

Beth Cogan

Jeanette Croen

Steven McCafferty

Hannah Goodman

Meredith Schulhof

Julia Schepis

Jibril Howard

The working group will be responsible for further developing democratic engagement actions and overseeing the implementation of this action plan. They will also be identifying and

developing other students who have the interest and capacity to lead this type of democratic engagement work. Not every working group member needs to be involved with or support every component of the action plan – members will have different interests and motivations which collectively will serve to support civic engagement. It is the hope that in the identification and development of other students, the working group will be inclusive of and open to all interests and community members.

The working group will meet at least once a month for the months of: July, August, September, October, November, and December.

From an institutional perspective, the following individuals/offices will be asked in June 2020 to work in partnership and as an oversight board in voter engagement efforts on campus. Their responsibilities are to meet twice a year in an election year to review the Voter Engagement Plan, offer suggestions and possible partnerships/support and then again after the NSLVE data is sent to the college to assess the success of the plan.

Stephanie Coldren, Vice President for Marketing and External Relationships
Kathryn Doherty, Associate Provost and Executive Director of Graduate Programs
Pamela Finton, Interim Co-College Librarian
Mark Bladel, Assistant Director of Study Abroad
Lindsay Johnson, Frances Merrick Director of Community Based Learning

NSLVE Data

Goucher College has been a member of the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement since 2012. With each election we have improved on our student voting rate.

2012 – 54.1% turnout / 79.9% registered	2014 – 19.7% turnout / 71.3% registered
2016 – 62.2% turnout / 83.6% registered	2018 – 47.9% turnout / 78.8% registered

While a 70% voter turnout rate is an ambitious goal, it is one that is not unattainable. We have done a relatively good job of getting absentee ballots into the hands of students which is important given the number of students from out of state. But since the 2018 election, the Maryland state legislature passed and enacted a same day voter registration law for voting on election day. Previously you could register and vote on the same day only in early voting. This opens up a potential avenue for voter engagement as some students miss the boat on applying for an absentee ballot or registering to vote in their home state.

2012 – 35.3% voted via mail or absentee ballot
2014 – 18.2% voted via mail or absentee ballot
2016 – 30.7% voted via mail or absentee ballot
2018 – 27.7% voted via mail or absentee ballot

Anticipating disruptions to normal voting procedures due to Covid-19 and the increased likelihood of more states moving to mail-in ballots, our previous experience of working with students in securing absentee ballots positions us well.

Actions Planned for Spring and Fall 2020

(tentative as events will be added as student leaders organize and plan)

January:

PSC 249 New Hampshire Presidential Politics taking place over J-term in Manchester, NH. Students will have class in the morning, have various meetings with professionals whose work is in electoral politics, spend 20 hours/week campaigning for a candidate of their choice, and attend candidate rallies, town halls and house parties.

February:

11th: New Hampshire election returns viewing party.

Send emails to students with their absentee ballot applications.

Share the candidate guide with the Goucher community that was developed by the students who took the above mentioned J-Term course.

March:

3rd: Super Tuesday election returns viewing party.

Send emails to students with their absentee ballot applications.

April:

To be determined.

August:

Voter registration / absentee ballot tabling at student move-in. Edited to add: if we are not able to table at student move-in, we will work on an email campaign with the communications office of the College.

September: (will work with students to work out a social-distancing alternative)

Second week of September: Goucher Votes! Voter Registration / Absentee Ballot drive. We will visit every First Year Seminar to speak with students; we will table from 11am – 1pm on Van Meter Highway and in the evenings from 5-6 in the dining hall. We will ask students to sign Goucher Votes! Voter pledge cards which will be delivered to their dorm rooms two weeks before the November election.

22nd: Voter Extravaganza to celebrate National Voter Registration Day. Voter Extravaganza features candidate tabling, games, music, food and some speakers who will give voter mobilization speeches.

October: (will work with students to plan for a social-distancing alternative)

Debate Watching parties for each debate.

End of October, coordinate with SPCA to have a “Fill Out Your Absentee Ballot Party” with adoptable dogs in attendance.

November: (will work with students to plan for a social-distancing alternative)

Coordinate vans to drive students to the polls on Election Day and /or during early voting

Election night returns party in the Athenaeum.