

# VOTER MOBILIZATION PLAN

GOUCHER COLLEGE

May 31, 2022

## *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 supports and reinforces the core values of the college.

Youth voter turnout reached record high levels in 2020. At Goucher College, we saw 74.3% of our students voting in the election. We understand that two factors contributed largely to that number: the adoption of mail-in ballots by states across the country greatly easing the process of voting and the desire to ensure the incumbent president would not get re-elected.

Planning for the midterm elections in November 2022, we will take what we learned from the 2020 elections and build on it. We need to ensure students have information about the elections; midterms are comparatively lower profile and less visible than presidential elections and information about candidates is not as readily available. Also, we need to continue to make the process as easy as possible, making sure students are registered and that out-of-state students have absentee ballots being sent to them on campus. Student engagement by their peers about voting is more important than ever.

This plan has been developed by Nina Kasniunas, Associate Professor of Political Science. The action plan presented here is intended to take effect July 1, 2022 and will remain in effect through the fall semester of 2022. 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.

## *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.
  - a. Special attention will be paid to building relationships with the fairly new Student Affairs team at Goucher College
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 100% of eligible Goucher students to vote for the 2022 general election.
5. Get 500 voter pledge cards signed by Goucher students for the 2022 general election.
6. Student voter turnout rate of 60%.

## *Leadership*

Nina Kasniunas, Associate Professor in Political Science is leading the efforts outlined in this action plan with the support of the student voter mobilization team - a group of self-identified students who have expressed interest in doing this work, and other staff identified below.

The voter mobilization team 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.

In addition to the student voter mobilization team, Professor Kasniunas will collaborate closely with: Lindsay Johnson, Director of Community Based Learning; Andrea Preston and Eric Camodeca within the athletics program; Juan Hernandez, Associate Dean of Students for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and with the Student Affairs team.

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

### *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
2020 – 74.3% turnout / 84.6% registered	

While a 60% voter turnout rate is an ambitious goal for a midterm election, 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 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
2020 – 50.0% voted via mail or absentee ballot

### *Actions Planned for Fall 2022*

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

#### August:

Voter registration / absentee ballot tabling at student move-in.

#### September:

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.

20th: 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:

TBD – activities will focus on voter education and getting students information about the elections in their state

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

