



HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH
COLLEGES

ALL IN Challenge Voting Plan



May 2022-May 2023

Executive Summary

HWS Votes is a non-partisan group of student leaders devoted to voter registration and voter education of the Hobart and William Smith and Geneva communities. We instill a sense of civic duty in all citizens through active participation in the democratic process.

Through the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL), HWS Votes works with politically-oriented groups on campus to maximize student participation and understanding of the electoral process.

Through the partnership between HWS Votes and HWS' CCESL we have developed this action plan to build upon and expand our earlier efforts in increasing our registration and voting numbers on campus. This action plan is meant to be used as a guide to inform administration, faculty, staff, and students to become more aware of the importance of voting. This plan will also be used to encourage the support of key local, state, and national voting advocacy organizations. Finally, this plan was developed to showcase the engagement being done at HWS to encourage students to become more engaged in civic and political processes.

The 2020-21 HWS Votes All In Democracy Challenge Action Plan was developed by Audrey Platt HWS '21 and Kate Equinozzi HWS '23, student leaders of HWS Votes and the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, with assistance from former Assistant Director, Amy Jackson, Director Katie Flowers, and CCESL Faculty Liaison and Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurial Studies Craig Talmage.

The 2022-23 HWS Votes All In Democracy Challenge Action Plan has been written by Samari Brown HWS '24 and Katelyn Oswald HWS '24, student leaders of HWS Votes and the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, with assistance from Assistant Director Peter Budmen, Director Katie Flowers, and CCESL Faculty Liaison and Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurial Studies Craig Talmage.

HWS Votes is proud of the voter registration rate and voting rate improvements seen at HWS since we began tracking this data through NSLVE, and our latest report from 2020 shows an increase in the voter registration rate of 15.9% and an increase in the HWS student voting rate of 48.4% since the 2018 midterms. Through this Action Plan, we seek to improve upon our 2018 voter registration rate of 73.1% and our 2018 midterm voting rate of 20.5%.

The 2020-21 voting calendar, which included the November 3, 2020, Presidential Election, ignited a lively political discourse we are proud of encouraging here on campus. We will continue to build on our strong foundation of interpersonal dialogue and strengthen the culture of democratic engagement on our campus. We will focus on increasing registration and turnout rates for our lowest propensity voters and supporting students in acting as informed voters. In addition to maintaining our strongest outreach efforts to students, we will expand our voter education efforts to inform students about candidates on the ballot and what they stand for, help clarify fast-moving changes in election practices during the Covid-19 pandemic, build new relationships with campus and community partners, and prepare for all Covid-19 pandemic-related possibilities of campus life for Fall 2022, including a mix of virtual and on-campus efforts.

Leadership

The leadership for HWS Votes for 2022-23 is comprised of:

- Katelyn Oswalt, WS '24, Co-leader HWS Votes
- Samari Brown, WS '24, Co-leader HWS Votes
- Kate Equinozzi, WS '23, Co-leader HWS Votes
- Katie Flowers: Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
- Peter Budmen: Assistant Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
- Alex Cottrell: Program Assistant for Center for Community Engagement & Service Learning
- Dr. Craig Talmage: Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurial Studies, CCESL Faculty Liaison

The following departments and offices are stakeholders whom we've identified as having a large hand in previous voter engagement initiatives as well as areas that we've identified on campus who could aid their students in exercising their right to vote:

- IT Services
- Representatives from Academic Depts:
 - Political Science
 - Public Policy
 - Economics
 - International Relations
 - History Dept
 - Women Studies
 - Economics
 - Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Environmental)
 - Media and Society
- Student Engagement:
 - Residential Life and Community Assistants
 - Student Activities
 - Greek Life
 - Student Government
- Politics-based on-campus groups
- Hobart Athletics Department
- William Smith Athletics Department
- The Office of Spiritual Engagement
- Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs:
 - Global Education (Study Abroad)
 - William Smith and Hobart Deans' Offices
 - Center for Teaching and Learning
 - The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning - civic leaders
 - The Center for Community and Engagement and Service-Learning – staff
 - Centennial Center for Leadership
 - Institutional Research
- Community members (League of Women Voters, City Council Representatives, Geneva Business Improvement District (Michael Mills'95 served as a panelist for HWS Votes previously))

Groups:

- Service Learning Advisory Council

Support will be encouraged and sought out from local, state, and national supporting organizations, including:

- Campus Compact (temporarily suspending our relationship with Campus Compact in favor of a

more local effort with [PCCE](#) - Partners for Campus Community Engagement - NY and PA)

- Andrew J. Goodman Foundation
- National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement report (NSLVE)
- All In for Campus Democracy Challenge
- Geneva League of Women Voters

As a means of engaging the campus community early, HWS Votes reached out to the above stakeholders to hold a meeting with each of them to provide information about our efforts, celebrate our previous successes, and brainstorm ideas for future collaborations. The agenda for these meetings can be [found here](#). We found these meetings to be productive and meaningful in regards to renewing different office's and department's commitment to the cause.

While not every office was available to meet during the Spring 2022 semester, an opportunity to respond in writing was also provided which a few offices took advantage of. All in all we're grateful for the ideas that came out of these meetings and plan on remaining in constant communication with our constituents on a regular basis.

Landscape:

Since 2012, Hobart and William Smith Colleges have partnered with the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) operated by Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life to measure the voting rates of students.

For the HWS report released in October of 2021, NSLVE compared voting data for 2016, 2018, and 2020; two of which were highly anticipated presidential elections. In 2016 out of the 1318 students who were eligible voters there was a voting rate of 36% which was 18% lower than the average of all participating institutions (54%). Comparatively, in 2020 out of the 1452 eligible voters there was a voting rate of 69%, up 33% from the prior presidential election. The increase of a voting rate by 33% earned Kate Equinozzi HWS '23 a spot on the [Student Voting Honor Roll by All In To Vote](#) in recognition for her work on voter engagement during the 2020-21 school year.

Midterms always seem to be difficult for voter engagement; HWS Votes needed a plan to proactively and consistently address this opportunity. Compared to the 2014 data, 2018 was much better. With 1,524 eligible student voters 1,176 were registered to vote, which was 324 students higher than 2014. The voting rate (24.5%) increased by 19.4% from 2014 and was again 14.6% lower than the average for all participating institutions. The registration rate (77.2%) increased 17.3% and the voting rate of registered students (31.7%) also increased from 2014 by 23.3%. When compared to the Carnegie Classification, we were 12.9% lower than the voting rate of Bachelor's Institutions, 14.2% lower than Public Bachelor's Institutions (38.7%), and 13.6% lower than Private Bachelor's Institutions (38.1%). We hope to make a profound difference in these statistics in this upcoming midterm election.

Overall in all four years, our students primarily voted by absentee ballot with a 33% rate in 2016, 41% in 2018, and 42% in 2020. This is helpful information as we plan our efforts and suggests we focus our support on encouraging vote by mail for the upcoming 2022 midterm elections, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

One area for improvement to try for is to get our voting rate closer to the average rate for all participating institutions. First, we aim to address the voting percentage of upperclassmen. The 2018 & 2020 data for this category shows that sophomore students have the highest level of participation here on campus, 21% and 70% respectively. We postulate that this is because sophomore students have had a year to get their footing on campus and have more "brainspace" to focus on life outside of HWS. Similarly, HWS students typically study abroad in the junior year making it difficult to understand how to vote while away from home and seniors are preparing for job interviews and post-graduation.

The top three fields of study with the highest voting rate were Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (94%), Natural Resources & Conservation (74%), and Visual & Performing Arts (73%) in 2020. NSLVE also provides the lowest rated fields of study for voting, which are Communication and Journalism (60%), Computer & Information Sciences (55%), and Area, Ethnic, Cultural, and Gender Studies (50%) also in 2020. This data can help us gauge what departments we should prioritize making connections with when we reach out with this ALL IN plan.

It's important to note that the FERPA blocks likely led to an underreporting of a full picture of HWS student voter turnout. It's our understanding that a student could "opt out" of having data shared, which could have implications for accuracy of our student voter turnout. We will work with our Office of Institutional Research to more fully understand this potential obstacle and strategies to address.

HWS Votes History:

2022

[Equinozzi '23 Named to "ALL IN" Honor Roll for Voter Registration – Hobart and William Smith Colleges \(hws.edu\)](https://www2.hws.edu/news/2022/03/22/equinozzi-23-named-to-all-in-honor-roll-for-voter-registration-hobart-and-william-smith-colleges/)

2020-21

HWS All In Action Plan 2020-21

<https://allinchallenge.org/wp-content/uploads/Hobart-and-WilliamSmith-Colleges-Action-Plan-2020.pdf>

NSLVE Data celebrated, significant increase in presidential election voter turnout

<https://www2.hws.edu/voting-up-at-hws/>

HWS NSLVE Data - Updated 2020

<https://allinchallenge.org/wp-content/uploads/Hobart-William-Smith-Colleges-NSLVE-Report-2020.pdf>

2020

<https://www2.hws.edu/increasing-turnout-with-hws-votes/>

<https://mailchi.mp/hws/compass-times-hws-votes-special-election-issue>

<https://www2.hws.edu/hws-goes-all-in-to-boost-voting/> - HWS enrolls in All In challenge

<https://www2.hws.edu/hws-votes-brings-congress-to-campus/>

2019

New logo - <https://www2.hws.edu/hws-votes-on-election-day/>

2018

Congress to Campus:

<https://www2.hws.edu/congressional-reps-visit-campus/>

2016

Panel discussion <https://www2.hws.edu/article-id-19512/>

Turbo vote <https://www2.hws.edu/hws-top-turbovote-campus/>

2005

<https://www2.hws.edu/article-id-1706/>

2004

HWS Votes is founded by a group of civic leaders!

<https://www2.hws.edu/article-id-5799/>

Methodology for Voter Engagement

It is clear through our information gathering that the lifestyle of a college student has drastically changed in the past four years. As a means of meeting our students where they are at, we have investigated what other colleges and universities are doing to support their voter engagement. Vote For Astra is one such organization working to address the communication expectations college students have. Campus Canvas is a civic engagement effort born out of the recognition that traditional tabling, email, and posterage no longer works on a college campus where students are receiving countless pieces of information on a multitude of platforms. Campus Canvas' efforts believe that voter engagement is best accomplished through a relational manner, on a consistent basis, and through a convenient method. For example, a captain on a sport's team will have a more significant impact on their teammate's interest in voting than a staff member whom they've never met. Similarly, texting a friend or reaching out to them on Facebook Messenger or a space where they already communicate regularly will elicit a higher response rate than hoping for engagement while someone walks by a tabling set up. Lastly, Campus Canvas recommends there be at least three outreaches throughout the semester in order to hold students accountable and keep it relevant in their minds. We hope to use this model of canvassing to connect with our student body in a relational, convenient, and consistent manner - HWS would like to thank Vote for Astra, Founder Lucas Carmal, for his commitment to civic engagement and his willingness to support our institution's voter engagement efforts with Campus Canvas.

Similarly, we have worked hard to identify a few organizations that we'll utilize to aid with voter education. Specifically, All In Campus Democracy Challenge and VoteRider whom we'll rely heavily on and direct student's to their websites for additional information about their specific voting needs and circumstances. We believe by uniforming our voting educational resources we will have better success with student/community engagement. In this vein, we have transitioned our campus Voter Registration portal to be housed under All In in order to better communicate our election participation with NSLVE. We're excited about this collaboration and are thankful to those at All In for their ongoing assistance and support.

Goals

- June/July 2022
 - Transition to All In Voter Registration Portal
 - Connect with Registrar and IT services about allinchallenge.org/ integration into PeopleSoft for 2022 midterms
 - Engage stakeholders if [Left Middle Right debate](#) representatives information is available by 8/1 to ensure proper amount of time to build visit into course syllabi
 - Confirm Data trackers from NSLVE to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
 - Work with our Center for Global Education, CGE (abroad office) to ensure students temporarily transition their votes to Overseas Citizen Voters
 - Integrate registration and voter turnout education into First Year Orientation
 - Marketing & Communications
 - Foster consistent and engaging social media presence
 - Purchase HWS Votes stickers
 - Update HWS Votes Website
 - [Order VoteRider Voter ID Cards](#)
 - Create a marketing campaign
 - to compare 2016 and 2020, and 2018 and teaser for 2022
 - Plan a voter educator awareness campaign regarding all of the jobs it takes to run an election from Lieutenant Governor to Poll Worker and Poll Certifier
 - Primaries-focused social media engagement
 - Finalize and Prepare for Fall Plan, below
- August 2022

- Re-orient new leadership (Samari and Kate)
- Create a recruitment plan to populate HWS Votes student coalition membership (ideally a group of 10 consistent members who would meet weekly in the Fall)
- Engage with campus stakeholder list - touch base regarding proposed dates, plans, and collaborations
- Attend Andrew Goodman National Civic Leadership Training Summit (Aug 11 + 12 - Virtual)
- Participate in first-year orientation, make a presence at events, and help get students registered 8/18-8/21
 - Share information in opening remarks at First-Year Day of Service
- Get in front of HWS Faculty at staff meeting to offer up course visits and information on 2022 midterms
- Recruit HWS Votes Student Coalition membership at HWS Involvement Expo 8/26
- September 2022
 - Begin HWS Votes student coalition – weekly meetings
 - Update meeting information and documents on HWS Engage
 - Propose to BAC for funding by second week of classes
 - Plan First-Year Seminar visits to promote registration confirmation and participation in HWS Votes
 - National Voter Registration Day - September 20
 - Host multiple “chat and chew” events across campus to encourage folks to register to vote
- October 2022
 - Family Weekend September 30-Oct 2 - work with Student Engagement to promote voter registration among families, HWS Votes participates throughout the weekend
 - National Voter Education Week 3-7
 - Host a Panel
 - Former HWS Votes Civic Leaders
 - International Student Panel on voting in other countries
 - Jobs that it takes to run an election
 - Fall Day of Service 10/15 – Collaborate with League of Women Voters to promote voter registration on campus and in the community
 - Mid October - [Left-Middle-Right Debate](#)
 - Have Jane Erickson HWS ‘07, founder of HWS Votes, speak to campus about voter engagement (Fall 2022 Board of Trustees Meeting Oct 21-22)
 - Vote Early Day - October 28
- November 2022
 - Election Hero Day - November 7
 - Election Day - November 8
- More Generally:
 - Programs: concentrated, interactive and educational
 - Deploy HWS Votes standard introduction and registration program through student, faculty and staff volunteer network fostering a commitment to civic engagement and voting with:
 - POAP (Pre-Orientation Adventure Program) & Orientation, Targeted classes, Athletics, and Residence Halls, FSEMs (First-Year Seminars) etc.
 - Pop-up photoshoots with a sign promoting voting
 - Consistent and timely events
 - Tabling, Club visits, Watch parties, political analysis and dialogue forums, Election Day “Party at the Polls”
- Marketing & Communications
 - Integrate the HWS community with the wave of youth voter engagement

- Consistent, educational, interactive, herd-mentality oriented social media activity
- Transparent and social content exhibiting community engagement and opportunity
- High profile endorsement and consistent communication from Senior Staff and Faculty
- Utilize campus newspaper, radio to promote

While specific programming around Civic Election Holidays has yet to be determined. On-campus programming will occur throughout the semester with specific consideration given to those specific days and weeks.

- Reach & Data
 - Aggregate numbers of students from upwards of 1,000 students in concentrated, small, peer to peer settings on: registration, vote-by-mail (VBM) status, and voting potential
 - Ensure voter registration and pre-registration of voters at Geneva High School
 - Raise the bar → for midterm elections: eligible voters (both potential and registered) with a 5% margin range
 - Voting Registration Rate:
 - Increase of 12% from our 2018 rate of 73% to reach a 2022 midterm election voter registration rate of at least 85%.
 - Voting Rate:
 - Increase of 30% from our 2018 rate of 20% to reach a 2022 midterm election voting rate of at least 50%.
- In-Person Goals (barring restrictions on campus due to COVID-19)
 - Voting station in CCESL equipped with forms, stamps, envelopes, & instructions
 - Prioritize on-campus Post Office accommodations such as extended hours during peak weeks leading up to election
 - Prioritize the use of All In Action Portal to aid voters in voting timeline, process, and rules/regulations
- Long Term Goals
 - External Partnerships
 - Maintain consistent engagement, support off campus initiatives
 - Research and develop deeper external support networks: grants, challenges, coalitions
 - Foster global perspectives and understanding of non-partisan, participatory democracy
 - Plan to bring Congress to Campus (successful visit in March 2020) or other national partner to campus in Spring 2023 (we had to collaboratively postpone a Fall 2021 visit due to Omnicron variant and Former Members of Congress unable to provide more than a week notice, which proved too difficult to adequately maximize their time and impact)
 - Connect with Andrew [Goodman Chapter at Cornell University](#), as we did in 2019 and found helpful
 - Internal Partnerships
 - Establish recognition and commitment trajectory for partners
 - Collaborate with President's Office to report on All In Challenge efforts and wrap up
 - Geneva 2030 - Our 'collective impact' initiative, anchored at HWS which seeks to support all Geneva's children from the cradle to career, may wish to have HWS Votes coalition members meet with students at Geneva High School or if/when they visit campus as part of the "college bound" program.
 - Reach & Data
 - Track NSLVE and data results
 - Work with Institutional Research to identify and strategize tactics to integrate distant communities into the HWS Votes active engagement

Reporting

This plan along with the NSLVE data cited in the plan will be shared on our All-In landing page as well as our HWS Votes page.

This plan will inevitably change as we progress through each semester and encounter new and different challenges than those we currently predict. As we encounter challenges and determine the plan needs to be updated, the Assistant Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning will be primarily responsible for making, documenting, and communicating those updates. In addition to being posted on the website, this plan will be electronically sent to all faculty, staff, and students. The same procedure will apply to the results of this plan and all evaluation done to indicate efforts on goals.

Assessment and Evaluation

Evaluation will be critical to knowing if our democratic engagement efforts were effective in increasing student participation in the areas of voter registration, education, and participation. It will also aid us in knowing whether or not we are achieving our short-term and long-term goals. Additionally, we would like the evaluation to give us information that will help us continue to improve student democratic engagement, build stronger coordination for democratic engagement efforts, and to better advocate for institutionalizing democratic engagement work on our campus.

We will track attendance at events/programs, assess outcomes using event/program evaluations, and work with NSLVE to obtain data for comparison to previous years. We intend to gather information throughout the process, and make adjustments to programming and outreach based on the data. We will share the information gathered through key stakeholders, reports to upper administration, and social media and news outlets as appropriate.

Internal and External Barriers

When reviewing the data for voter participation, we see the most potential for working with specific academic disciplines such as Communication and Journalism, Computer & Information Sciences, and Area, Ethnic, Cultural, and Gender Studies. We look forward to working alongside the academic chairs, student leaders, and majors from each discipline to encourage and promote voter registration. We will do this while keeping in mind the following barriers on campus:

Institutional Knowledge: Institutional knowledge is a priceless asset when it comes to how decisions have been made, the political nature of higher education campuses, and the various tried and true methods of student engagement that work on individual campuses. While our Civic Leaders do their best to train under one another and pass their knowledge along, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted our typical programming and ability to gather and learn from one another directly. Likewise, there has been change in the staff member who supervises the HWS Votes Student Coalition. Luckily, the new staff member was a student on our campus back in 2011-2016, bringing back to campus with him a familiarity of HWS Votes and the different methods of engagement that have been done.

Competition for Attention: A common theme throughout all of the conversations we had with our stakeholders was the concern that we're competing for attention in an already crowded playing field. More specifically, be it through email, course visits, or even within our student union - all of these spaces are competing for the attention space of a college student's already busy mind. We feel we can address this primarily through our Campus Canvas approach in which we'll connect with students on a consistent basis, in a relational and convenient manner that suits their lifestyle and responsibilities. Similarly, we have had a number of offices including the Registrar offer to work with us on communicating with students in order to better advertise our messaging and capture student's attention.

Given that our student population comes from 35 different counties and 40 different states, providing students personalized voter information has proven to be difficult, but we are encouraged through the use of platforms such as VoteRiders who provide this information easily. In this same vein, it has been recommended we work with IT Services to source different email listservs that filter out international students and students under 18 in order to target our communications.

Political Landscape: The article, “Voting Laws Roundup: December 2021”, highlights the significance of our political landscape since the 2020 presidential election, stating that “between January 1 and December 7, at least 19 states passed 34 laws restricting access to voting. More than 440 bills with provisions that restrict voting access have been introduced in 49 states in the 2021 legislative sessions.” Given the ever-changing landscape of voting rights, voting access, and voting laws - it is more important than ever we are having students confirm their voter registration and provide them accurate information to successfully cast their vote on time.

This plan is effective from May 31, 2022 through May 31, 2023.

Contact Information: For further information or general questions please contact the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL) office in 203 Trinity Hall. Additionally, you can call us at (315) 781-3825 or email us at vote@hws.edu or serve@hws.edu.

Bibliography:

Institute for Democracy Higher Education: National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement. (2021). 2016, 2018, and 2020 report for Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Medford, MA

Brennan Center for Justice. 2021. *Voting Laws Roundup: December 2021*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-december-2021>> [Accessed 12 May 2022].