



Hobart and William Smith Colleges ALL IN Challenge Voting Plan



May 2020-May 2021

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, from the College Republicans and the College Democrats to Americans for Informed Democracy and the Progressive Student Union, to maximize student participation and understanding of the electoral process.

Through the partnership between HWS Votes and HWS' Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, 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 Assistant Director Amy Jackson and 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 2018 shows an increase in the voter registration rate of 17.3% and an increase in the HWS student voting rate of 19.4%. But, we still lag behind the national averages for both college registration rates and voting rates. Through this Action Plan, we seek to improve upon our 2018 voter registration rate of 77.2% and our 2018 voting rate of 25.4%

In 2020-21, which includes the November 3, 2020, Presidential Election, we will continue to build on our strong foundation 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 2020, including a mix of virtual and on-campus efforts.

Leadership

The leadership for HWS Votes for 2020-21 is comprised of:

- Audrey Platt, WS' 21: Co-leader HWS Votes
- Kate Equinozzi, WS '23, Co-leader HWS Votes
- Katie Flowers: Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
- Amy L. Jackson: Assistant Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
- Dr. Craig Talmage: Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurial Studies, CCESL Faculty Liaison

Our goal is to coordinate and create a pilot for a HWS Votes Campus Coalition incorporating representatives from at least ten of the following groups to meet two to three times before Nov. 3, 2020.

Committee members may be comprised of members from:

- Intercultural Affairs Department
- IT (Dusan Ducic, Support Center Manager at HWS)
- Political Science, Professor Ricky Price
- Representatives from key Academic Depts: International Relations, History Dept, Women Studies, Economics, Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Environmental), and Media and Society, etc.
- Residential Life and Resident Advisors
- Student Activities
- Student Government
- Politics-based on-campus groups
- Hobart Athletics Department
- William Smith Athletics Department
- Greek Life
- Study Abroad
- Chaplain's Office (Nita Byrd)
- Community members (League of Women Voters, City Council Representatives)
- Center for Teaching and Learning
- The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning's Civic Leaders
- Centennial Center's HWS Leads
- Service Learning Advisory Council

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

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

Landscape:

In 2012, Hobart and William Smith 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. NSLVE collects data every other year and created two reports comparing 2012 and 2016 and then another with 2014 and 2018.

For the HWS report released in August of 2017, [NSLVE compared voting data for 2012 and 2016](#) which was a presidential election. In 2012 out of the 1,475 students who were eligible voters there was a voting rate of 36.7% which was 10.2% lower than the average of all participating institutions (46.9%). When examining the overall voting rate by Carnegie Classification, Hobart and William Smith's voting rates were 9.1% lower than Bachelor's Institutions (45.8%), 10.1% lower than Public Institutions (46.8%) and 10.5% lower than the Private Institutions (47.2). Out of the 1,475 students eligible to vote, there was a 70.1% registration rate. Out of those eligible voters who registered to vote, 52.3% of them voted. By gender, 42.7% of the voters were women and 28.0% were men.

In 2016, total student enrollment was a hundred students lower, resulting in a decrease in total eligible students by 151 individuals. Out of the eligible 1,324 students there was a voting rate of 37.2% which was a 0.5% increase from 2012. Our voting rate was 13.2% lower than the average voting rate for all participating institutions. For 2016, when compared to the Carnegie Classification, Hobart and William Smith voting rate was 12.3% lower than Bachelor Institutions (49.5), 12.6% lower than Public Institutions (49.8%) and 14.3% lower than other Private Institutions (51.5%). Though the registration rate compared to 2012 increased by 7.8% to 77.9%, the voting rate of registered students decreased by 4.6% to 47.7%. The voting rates of women and men both increased by 9.3% and 12.7% respectively.

The [most recent report was one released in September 2019](#) that compared voting data from 2014 and 2018. In 2014, out of the total eligible voters (1,422 students) only 5.1% voted which was 14.6% lower than the average voting rate for all participating institutions. Out of the 1,422 eligible students, there was a registration rate of 59.9%. The voting rate of those registered students was very low with only 72 registered students voted (8.5%). When comparing our institution's data to the Carnegie Classification on voting, we are 12.3% lower than Bachelor's Institutions (17.4%), 16.1% lower than Public Bachelor's Institution (21.2%), and 11.6% lower than Private Bachelor's Institutions. There was no information on the field of study the voters fell under or their education level.

Compared to the 2014 data, 2018 is 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 comparing 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%).

Overall in all four years, our students primarily voted by absentee ballot with a 32.2% rate in 2012, 20.8% in 2014, 28.3% rate in 2016, and 27.6% in 2018. This is helpful information as we plan our efforts and suggests we focus our support on encouraging vote by mail for the upcoming 2020 elections, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are two clear opportunities of improvement to try and get our voting rate closer to the average rate for all participating institutions. First is the voting percentage of upperclassmen. The 2012 data for this category is unavailable; however, in 2016, the first year class had the greatest percentage of voters at

36.8%. The two other categories, specifically upperclassmen containing a higher portion of students, can focus our efforts in promoting their engagement in the upcoming 2020 elections as well.

As well, in the most recent report of NSLVE, limited data was collected for comparing voting rates by field of study for 2018. The top three fields of study with the highest voting rate were Biological and Biomedical Sciences (33.7%), History (27.5%), and a tie between Psychology (23.1%) and Social Sciences (23.1%). NSLVE also provides the lowest rated fields of study for voting, which are Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Humanities (22.8%), English Language and Literature (21.2%), and lastly Communication and Journalism (19.0%). 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.

Goals

1. Summer 2020 Goals

- External Partnerships & Data
 - Catalogue, compare and contrast Voting Organizations and share efforts with NYS Andrew Goodman Foundation Coalition
 - Determine suitable partnerships for HWS Votes
 - Streamline integration of partnerships through PeopleSoft and HWS Website
 - Confirm Data trackers from NSLVE to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- Internal Partnerships
 - Lay groundwork for a streamlined interpersonal network strengthening student engagement and action come Fall 2020 and forward
- Consolidate Registration
 - Aggregate regional registration links and forms
 - 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
 - Create design and purchase stickers
 - Update HWS Votes Website
- Finalize and Prepare for Fall Plan, below

2. Fall 2020

- Implement Internal Partnership Outreach Channels
 - Establish and foster internal partners integrating HWS Votes into the student experience
 - Connect with potential HWS Votes Campus Coalition members (page 3)
 - 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

- 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 Presidential Elections: eligible voters (both potential and registered) with a 5% margin range, barring further unforeseen COVID-19 complications*
 - Voting Registration Rate:
 - Increase of 7.1% from our 2016 rate of 77.9% to reach a 2020 Presidential election voter registration rate of at least 85%.
 - Voting Rate:
 - Increase of 12.8% from our 2016 rate of 37.2% to reach a 2020 Presidential election voter registration 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
 - Carpool transportation to Election Day precincts

3. 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
- Internal Partnerships
 - Establish recognition and commitment trajectory for partners
 - Collaborate with President's Office to report on All In Challenge efforts and wrap up
 - Plan to bring [Congress to Campus](#) (successful visit in March 2020) or other national partner to campus in Spring 2022
- Reach & Data
 - Track NSLVE and data results
 - Identify and strategize tactics to integrate distant communities into the HWS Votes active engagement
 - Further incorporate engagement with campus visits: International Students, Admissions, Athletic and Co-Curricular competitions

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 also do an overall evaluation with all data once we receive our 2020 NSLVE report to assess our success in meeting the goals we have set out in this plan. We will share the information gathered through key stakeholders, reports to upper administration, and social media and news outlets as appropriate.

This plan is effective from May 31, 2020 through May 31, 2021.

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.