



Hofstra University 2024 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

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Center for Civic Engagement

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This nonpartisan democratic engagement plan was developed following discussions and drafting sessions among key stakeholders at Hofstra University and locally. In March 2024, the university's long-time civic engagement efforts were recognized by the Nassau County Board of Elections, which chose Hofstra as a site for early voting in the 2024 presidential primary and November 5, 2024 general elections.

Through 2024, our aim is to continue to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 presidential election, both on campus and in our neighboring community. Our goals for the 2024 election are:

- Educate students and community members on the importance of voting; help students to make a plan to vote.
- Encourage students and community members to vote at Hofstra's new early voting location, and to ensure its proper functioning so as to maintain early voting at Hofstra in the future.
- Maintain a website ([Hofstra.edu/votes](https://hofstra.edu/votes)) that provides online resources to help students register to vote, learn how to apply for an absentee ballot, check their polling place, or research races and candidates in their state/election district.

¹ Many thanks to CCE Fellows Ashley Hernandez, Laika Jerome, and Donay Lewis for their comments on drafts of this plan.

- Register students to vote and/or help them apply for a mail-in ballot at major events as well as through once- or twice-weekly registration tabling in the Student Center between September 1 and Election Day.
- Build a cooperative partnership with the Nassau County Board of Elections to help increase recruitment of young people in voting.
- Create digital and printed informational materials for students that include deadlines for voter registration and absentee ballot applications for the top 10 states from which Hofstra students come.
- Train and build a sustainable team of students to do peer-to-peer voter registration/absentee ballot applications for the presidential election; create a pipeline to continue this work after the 2024 elections.
- Build excitement, enthusiasm, and engagement on social media with the creation of original videos that highlight why members of the campus community vote, feature information about the health benefits of voting and civic engagement and use fun, classic cartoon characters and bits to remind people to vote.
- Create and distribute branded swag that promotes the campaign and the #HofstraVotes hashtag, including pens, phone cases, stickers, and temporary tattoos.
- Each year, hire paid summer #HofstraVotes student fellows to do research and help train other students.

II. LEADERSHIP

Since submitting our first plan, we have sought to broaden representation and ensure succession for our leadership team. Throughout Spring 2024, we held discussion and drafting sessions among faculty and designated undergraduate fellows in the Center for Civic Engagement, as well as key administrators, leaders of student groups, and community partners. We created a working group to coordinate Hofstra Votes activities. It consists of the following positions:

1) **A Hofstra Votes Faculty Coordinator** housed within the University's Center for Civic Engagement (Currently Rosanna Perotti, Professor of Political Science). This faculty member leads the training of voter registration volunteers and supervises research (Example: turnout rates in election districts in Hofstra's immediate neighborhood). The Faculty Coordinator

- gives an annual presentation to faculty and members of the campus community on voter registration and turnout at Hofstra and in Hofstra's immediate community.

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- works with CCE Fellows to recruit and train volunteers for voter registration. Each Fall, these volunteers will include students working on learning projects in Political Science 114 (Political Parties and the Voter) and other courses.

- acts as a liaison between the university and the Nassau County Board of Elections and other partners such as the League of Women Voters. The Board of Elections works with civic engagement volunteers by processing voter registration forms, providing statistics about local voter registration, and staffing the early voting site on campus.

Succession: This faculty coordinator will be designated by the Director of the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) and the Associate to the President for Government and Community Affairs and recruited from a relevant academic department such as PPPS (Public Policy & Public Service Studies) or Political Science.

2) **Director, Center for Civic Engagement** (Currently Phil Dalton, Professor of Rhetoric). CCE is the main source of student initiatives and staff for voter registration and education efforts.

Succession: This post is appointed by the Provost.

3) **Associate to the President for Government and Community Affairs** (Currently Chanda Washington). This administrator works closely with the university president in advocating for the university in the local, state, national and international communities. This role supports the Hofstra Votes effort by identifying resources and leveraging community partnerships.

Succession: This administrator is appointed by the university president.

4) **Summer Research Fellows** (2024 team led by Hamna Haque). This undergraduate group, supported by the Office of Government and Community Affairs, conducts research on voting procedures and on voter turnout in our immediate community.

Succession: These research fellows are designated by the Faculty Coordinator.

5) **At least two undergraduate Fellows with the Center for Civic Engagement** (Spring 2024 fellows were Hamna Haque and Hannah Ardiffe). These fellows coordinate the reservation of tables in the Student Center Atrium, schedule voter registration volunteers, and staff events such as the 100 Black Women Meet the Candidate Forum (October 2023) and potential League of Women Voters Candidate Forums. Fellows work at least 10 hours a week with Hofstra Votes as a community partner and receive a stipend from the Center for Civic Engagement.

These fellows work together, but going forward at least one will be designated for outreach to campus groups such as Student Government, NAACP, College Dems and Republicans, and DREAM (Disability Rights Education Activism and Mentoring group), QTPOCC, Pride Network,, Commuter Students Association, First Gen Pride, and Hofstra Organization of Latin Americans.

Succession: These fellows are self-selected and assigned to Hofstra Votes as a community partner by the Faculty Coordinator and director of the Center for Civic Engagement.

6) **Event Management.** Works with the Board of Elections to maintain the early voting location.

7) **Student Leadership and Engagement.** Works with Faculty Coordinator and CCE fellows to secure space weekly for tabling.

III. COMMITMENT

Hofstra University's commitment to civic engagement runs deep and is infused into the curriculum and the culture of the institution in many ways. Hofstra has organized [conferences](#) on the modern American presidency since 1982, typically led by political science or law professors. Those conferences laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Peter S. Kalikow Center for the Study of the American Presidency and the Peter S. Kalikow Chair in Presidential Studies in the early 2000s. These entities make Hofstra one of the very few institutions in the country with a unique focus on the US presidency.

In 2016, Hofstra became the only university to ever host three consecutive televised presidential debates (2008, 2012 and 2016). The university has hosted two gubernatorial debates and continues to host local and regional debates and candidate forums nearly every year, some with the League of Women Voters and some with 100 Black Women of Long Island. Preceding each televised presidential debate on campus, Hofstra has held an extensive series of community education events. In each presidential election from 2004 to 2020, Hofstra professors took students to New Hampshire to witness campaigning in the days leading up to that state's first-in-the-nation presidential primaries. The university has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2022, and a member of the All In Campus Democracy Challenge.

Hofstra's Associate to the President for Government and Community Affairs and its Event Management staff this year worked with the Nassau County Board of Elections to bring an early voting place to the university preceding the April 2, 2024 presidential primary and the November 5, 2024 general election.

At the same time, Hofstra has woven civic engagement into its broader academic curriculum and co-curricular activities. Moving beyond the traditional curricular offerings in the social sciences, faculty established a Center for Civic Engagement in 2007 to promote student involvement in community and public life. Each year, CCE hosts at least four special days devoted to raising student awareness about social justice and political issues: Indigenous People's Day (Early October), Day of Dialogue (Pre-November Election), Civil Rights Day (February), Global Justice Day (March), and Earth Day (April). On each of these days, a full slate of events is planned at the initiative of undergraduate CCE fellows, often working with faculty members on the CCE Advisory Board. These events, together with informational events sponsored by the Peter S. Kalikow Center for the Study of the American Presidency and

departmental programs supported by the Hofstra Cultural Center, offer a rich array of opportunities for members of the university and wider community to become informed about social and political issues.

Traditional classes such as PSC 001 American Politics and PSC 114 Political Parties and the Voter have long focused on incorporating civic engagement principles into the curriculum. Students in PSC 001 and PSC 114 have registered voters on campus, interviewed candidates for office, and written letters to public officials.

In recent years, however, new curricular additions have enhanced students' opportunities to engage civically. Over the past 20 years, faculty, through their governance structure, have

- established an interdisciplinary Public Policy and Public Service major which focuses on service and project-based learning
- created a Civic Engagement minor, including the required course CCE 001 Introduction to Civic Engagement
- crafted a Peace and Conflict Studies Minor, featuring Study Abroad programs to Northern Ireland and Colombia to speak firsthand with peacemakers
- trained students in the art of deliberative dialogue, both through the Center for Civic Engagement and through the new course RHET 180 Deliberation and Argument in our Democracy. CCE fellows in 2012 traveled to libraries all over Long Island to conduct 100 deliberative dialogues on current issues. Deliberative dialogues have been employed in rhetoric, political science and education classes. RHET 180, offered as part of a First Year Cluster in Fall 2024, will guide a class of 20 first-year students in developing issue guides exploring local community issues. Going forward, CCE Director Phil Dalton aims to revive the deliberative dialogue program of CCE.

Hofstra's Cultural Center, Center for Civic Engagement, and Center for the Study of the American Presidency continue to join with academic departments to organize and support dozens of special events and opportunities every semester.

IV. LANDSCAPE

Demographics. Hofstra University is a private 4-year institution with both a law school and a medical school. It is situated in a diverse, densely populated suburb spanning the Village of Hempstead and the hamlet of Uniondale. It joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2022. The university has 10,393 students, of which about 60 percent are undergraduates, according to the Fall 2023 university census. Forty-six percent of our undergrads are students of color, and 4 percent are international students. Sixty-six percent of the total enrollment came from New York state, and, after New York, the school's top 11 feeder states are New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Texas, California, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Virginia, Delaware, and Rhode Island. As of Fall 2022, according to US News, 41 percent of Hofstra

students lived on campus; the rest commuted from either within the school's Hempstead/Uniondale neighborhood, or from other parts of the Long Island region.

Electoral Engagement. We continue to find evidence that Hofstra's #HofstraVotes campaign, originally launched for the 2018 midterm elections, has had measurable impact. The university's voting rate more than tripled between 2014 and 2018, and our registration rate rose from 64.6 percent in 2014 to 78.6 percent in 2018.

These numbers continued to rise in 2020 and exceeded the average for all institutions participating in the NSLVE. For example, our registration rate rose 10 percentage points to 88.7 percent in 2020, and it exceeded the national average of 83%. Our voting rate was 74% in 2020, while the average for all institutions was 66 percent.

Early Voting Location. The addition of an early voting location at Hofstra is a major change in our landscape. The polling place was established through the Voter Outreach and Education Department of the Nassau County Board of Elections, which has partnered with Hofstra since 2018 to do nonpartisan voter registration and education. Though turnout at this new polling site was light during the presidential primary, Hofstra has a major opportunity to advertise the site in Fall 2024 and mobilize Nassau County and particularly on-campus registered students to use it.

Challenges. Hofstra's NSLVE report indicates that certain majors have lower voter turnout than others, for example biology, business, management, marketing, computer and information sciences, engineering, engineering technologies, and physical sciences. First year students' participation lags behind that of more senior students, and male turnout trails female turnout. Though NSLVE does not include race data for Hofstra, we learn from NSLVE's national data that Asian, Latino, and Black students' turnout continued to trail the turnout of white students.

Add to this a general disillusionment around voting based on widespread youth support for a ceasefire in Gaza, and the sense among students that their views are not represented well by the leadership of the two major political parties.²

In light of this, how can voting advocates proceed at Hofstra? There are many groups on campus that have civic engagement as part of their mission and that have not explicitly been made a part of our Hofstra Votes coalition: College Republicans, Hofstra Democrats, Student Government Association, NAACP, DREAM (Disability Rights Education Activism and Mentoring group), QTPOCC, Pride Network, Commuter Students Association, First Gen Pride, Center for "Race," Culture and Social Justice, and Hofstra Organization of Latin Americans. We are working on channels to include these groups more formally in our coalition outreach efforts.

² Homans, Charles, and Neil Vigdor, "Gaza Isn't Root of Biden's Struggles With Young Voters, Polls Show," *New York Times*, May 6, 2024.

We will discuss more specific strategies for targeting unregistered and inactive voters in Section VII of this report.

V. GOALS

We are pleased with our success implementing the goals of the 2022 plan, particularly amid turnover in our university administration. We increased voter registration and turnout and exceeded the national average. We obtained an early voting site on campus, and we participated in the All-In voter registration portal.

Our team's short-term goals for the 2024 election cycle are as follows:

- 1) Include voting-related work in the Fall 2024 curriculum offerings.
- 2) Remain an early voting location for remainder of the 2024 election cycle
- 3) Formalize our coordinating group, with the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) as the lead hands-on organization, the university's government and community engagement office as the funder, and other stakeholders.
- 4) Start building a better network of stakeholders across campus, including student groups, relevant campus departments, campus PR and marketing professionals, the Board of Elections, and local civic groups such as the Greater Uniondale Area Action Coalition (GUACC) and New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU).
- 5) Increase voter registration and turnout, particularly among lower-turnout groups such as first-year students, males, STEM majors, Asians, Latinos, and Black students. We hope to increase voter turnout to 80 percent of eligible voters, and to increase registration higher than 88 percent by focusing on underrepresented groups.
- 6) Mount a social media engagement campaign.
- 7) Obtain regular information from the Board of Elections regarding student registration and turnout, and regarding our students' and neighbors' use of our early voting site.
- 8) Make the Board of Elections a formal community partner of the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE).

Our long-term goals:

- 1) Integrate voting and civic engagement more broadly into our curriculum.
- 2) Establish an Election Day polling place on campus.
- 3) Retain our status as an early polling location for the next two election cycles (2026, 2028), and secure a permanent, dedicated space for the polling place.

- 4) Get students to use the early polling place and create education regarding its existence: create some buzz and excitement over it.
- 5) Get others in our immediate community to use the polling place.
- 6) Solidify our network of stakeholders across campus (student groups, relevant campus departments).
- 7) Increase awareness, in both the Hofstra community and among our neighbors, about on-campus events and voting statistics.
- 8) Build a stronger relationship with the Nassau County Board of Elections and local community groups.

VI. NSLVE

- Continue to subscribe to NSLVE, disseminate its reports to the Director of the Center for Civic Engagement, the Faculty Coordinator, and the Associate to the President for Government and Community Affairs.
- Faculty Coordinator will disseminate the information in our NSLVE reports to relevant stakeholders in the university and among our neighbors and prospective students. Coordinator will make at least one public presentation per year on Hofstra's progress.

VII. STRATEGY

Short-Term Measures

- 1) **Curriculum.** Enlist the Fall 2024 classes related to voting (we have identified five) in practical activities and community outreach.
- 2) **Early Voting Polling Place.** Continue to hold periodic meetings with officials from the Nassau County Board of Elections and university administration to make sure that facilities are adequate for the polling place.
- 3) **Leadership Coordination.** We have already created, within the CCE, a faculty coordinator position to take the lead on gathering principals of the voting coalition. We should assign at least two or three CCE undergraduate fellows to work on Hofstra Votes: one to manage tabling, one to manage outreach to student and community groups, and one to work with the BOE.
- 4) **Community Coalition Building.** Work with local organizations to train students for tabling and to become election observers. Hold at least one meeting per semester in 2024-2025 for our voting coalition: university officials, CCE organizers, community organization officials, and a BOE official. One of these meetings should be held prior to the election (what are we going to do?), and another prior to the end-of-the-year CCE banquet (how did we do?).

- 5) **Event Planning.** Increase student registration, turnout, and informed voting through pre-election events co-sponsored with Nassau Community College, the BOE, Student Government, the NAACP, CCE, Hofstra Votes Live (Herbert School) and other student organizations to inform students about election issues and voting procedures. Possibles:
- a) Tabling at First-Year orientation and/or Welcome Week club fair. Attending First Gen event or dinner
 - b) "Get Ready to Vote" event (date TBD), co-sponsored with NAACP
 - c) Debate Watch for the **September 10, 2024** presidential debate
 - d) At least one panel on student voting, and on the situation at Hofstra, during the Presidential Symposium on **September 24-26, 2024**, "Higher Education in an Election Year"
 - e) National Voter Registration Day Event, Tuesday, **September 17, 2024**, possibly with Nassau Community College
 - f) Golden Day Celebration **October 26, 2024**
 - g) Congressional District 4 candidate forum, co-sponsored with the League of Women Voters of Nassau County, date TBD
 - h) Day of Dialogue, Wed., **October 23, 2024**, events planned by student fellows and faculty on the CCE Advisory Board
 - Panel/event on the issues, researched by students in history, education and PPPS classes, on election issues
 - Panel/event on protest voting
 - i) Voter Information packet for local elections
 - j) Other events and activities devised by CCE fellows and others in the coalition
- 6) **Communication and voter education.**
- a) Continue working with the Office of Marketing and Communications to publicize the early voting site and upcoming deadlines through texts and other forms of communication.
 - b) Mount a student-led social media campaign through the Center for Civic Engagement. Give people table swag in exchange for following one of the social platforms we use. Choose a fellow to interview people "on the street," asking them their opinions, including about topics discussed in our NSLVE report. For instance, "Why do you think college women (or Hofstra

women) vote more often than men?” This could draw attention to student voting patterns, the awareness of which might have behavioral effects.

- 7) **Community Research.** Reach out to the BOE and learn more about the process of requesting information about registered voters and turnout on campus and in our neighborhood. This research will be undertaken by the summer CCE fellows and through Fall 2024 class projects.
- 8) **BOE Partnership.** Explore the possibility that the BOE might become a community partner to CCE.

Long -Term Measures

- 1) Hofstra’s [draft strategic plan](#) includes measures designed to integrate community engagement throughout the curriculum, such as adding one-credit civic engagement modules to current classes and stressing project-based and service learning in the community. (See “Community Engagement” section of the strategic planning webpage.)
- 2) Discuss election-day polling place with BOE.
- 3) Secure funding to renovate space for a permanent polling place.
- 4) Create programming and messaging to get students to use the early voting location.
- 5) Designate CCE fellows regularly to maintain our stakeholder network.
- 6) Work closely with Marketing/Communications and Cultural Center to increase awareness about on-campus events and voting statistics.
- 7) Regular meetings and communication with the BOE.

VIII. REPORTING

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN’s website.

Our report will be shared publicly on Hofstra University’s #HofstraVotes website – hofstra.edu/vote. It will be shared with student organizations and academic leaders including the Center for Civic Engagement, as well as with the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement, and with the Office of the President and the Office of the Provost.

IX. EVALUATION

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways

- 1) Tabulate the number of students who are trained and recruited to do voter registration. Data gathered pursuant to the 2022 report:

2022-2023	26
2023-2024	31

- 2) Tabulate the number of hours spent registering voters on campus (as measured by the hours of #HofstraVotes tabling.

2022-2023	87.50 person-hours
2023-2024	133.75 person-hours

- 3) Count the number of student advisement encounters at the Hofstra Votes table. An encounter is an interaction in which student registrars either register a voter, direct a student to a voting site, or direct a student to the absentee ballot website of his or her state.

2022-2023	Not known
2023-2024	582

- 4) Learn how many Hofstra students are registered on campus, through the BOE.
- 5) Use the NSLVE data to tell us about registration, turnout, and differences in turnout among groups.
- 6) Gauge registration within key student membership organizations - i.e. the NAACP and Student Government.