



Voter Engagement Action Plan May 2024

I | Executive Summary

The Lasell University Campus Voter Engagement Action Plan was developed by TD Byrd Hughes, Director of the Center for Community-Based Learning (CCBL) on behalf of the Lasell Votes Initiative. Lasell Votes is a nonpartisan initiative created to support the development of democratic participation as a core value of Lasell University through strengthening civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation. Using available resources, the Lasell Votes initiative works in collaboration and partnership with campus and community stakeholders to formalize an institution-wide structure to promote and support electoral engagement.

This plan acts as a framework for initiative actions towards utilizing best practices and creative strategies to engage students in the electoral process. Lasell has one campus located in Newton, Massachusetts. The plan will be implemented during the Fall 2024 semester, with the key goals of increasing registration and turnout for the 2024 Presidential election in November. Specifically, we aim to achieve the lofty goal of 100% registration and increase our eligible student voter turnout rate to 78.3%, 10 percentage points higher than achieved in the 2020 Presidential election. Additionally, we will work to rebuild the leadership of the Lasell Votes Initiative.

The main strategies we will utilize to achieve our registration and turnout goals are to:

1. Integrate MotiVote, our new digital platform, into universal touchpoints of the student experience to help lower barriers to registration and turnout
2. Participate in the Civic Holidays to organize events and encourage election engagement
3. Publicize efforts through social media engagement and campus outreach
4. Rebuild Lasell Votes student leadership by partnering with campus stakeholders to recruit

Longer term, we will continue to work on creating an open, inviting, and supportive campus climate and culture for civic learning and political engagement with multiple opportunities during and beyond elections. At the conclusion of the Fall 2024 semester, we will assess the effectiveness of our efforts and use the data to adapt and improve future offerings.

II | Leadership

The Lasell Votes Steering Committee organizes and implements voter outreach, education programming, and voter registration services, as well as develops collaboration opportunities for events and resource building with partners on and off campus. TD Byrd Hughes galvanized the establishment of Lasell Votes in 2019 by partnering with the Library Director and recruiting student volunteers. She is currently the only member of the steering committee remaining due to the student leaders graduating and the Library Director transition from Lasell University. She has not been able to fill the open roles as of the writing of this plan but is actively recruiting. It is important to note that the initiative is fully supported by senior leadership, has strong brand recognition on campus, and has benefited from successful collaborations with the listed partners.



Lasell Votes Steering Committee

TD Byrd Hughes, Director of the Center for Community-Based Learning (CCBL)

Role Currently Open, Outreach Coordinator

Role Currently Open, Events Manager

Role Currently Open, Graphic Designer

Campus Partners

Athletics Department | Campus Activities Board | Counseling Center | Curricular Innovation | Mailroom | Marketing & Communications Department | Student Government Association | Lasell Village | Nancy Lawson Donahue '49 Institute for Ethics, Diversity, and Inclusion | Office of Institutional Research | Office of the President | Office of the Provost | Office of the Registrar | Office of Residential Life | Office of Student Activities and Orientation | RoseMary B. Fuss Teaching & Learning Center

Community Partners

Boston Votes Coalition | League of Women Voters Newton | Newton Elections Department

National Partners/Resources

ALL IN | Ask Every Student | Civic Influencers | Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE) | Faculty for Student Voting Rights, an initiative of Scholars Strategy Network | Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) | Voter Friendly Campus (VFC)

Succession Planning

All the Lasell Votes assets are compiled in a single location and are accessible to all steering committee members as well as the Offices of the President and Provost. This ensures that the files will remain available and accessible amidst employee and student transitions. Lasell Votes is now officially hosted through the Center for Community-Based Learning, which ensures the initiative has a permanent institutional home. A guide to help students navigate the assets folder was created in 2023 by Sophia Couto '24 who was the last student leader on the steering committee.

III | Commitment

Lasell University has participated in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge since October 2019 and received the Voter Friendly Campus designation in AY2022-2023 and AY2023-2024. Our new President, Eric Turner, fully supports our efforts and recommitted our institution by signing the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

Civic and Community Engagement (CCE) is a primary component of the University's Core Curriculum. The CCE outcome is interwoven throughout many courses and experiences for our students. Though, no specific, stand-alone course is dedicated to developing this outcome, it instead, is lived through activities, readings, and assignments across the disciplines and at various stages in a students' education. Students have multiple opportunities to participate in civic and community engagement within the curriculum and co-curricular offerings.



IV | Landscape

Lasell University Mission Statement: We immerse students in experiential and collaborative learning that fosters lifelong intellectual exploration, social responsibility, and professional growth.

Founded in 1851, Lasell University is a private university located in Newton, Massachusetts that offers more than 60 undergraduate and graduate degrees through a curriculum of connected learning across our five academic schools. Our all-ages campus includes a daycare (the Barn), Rockwell Preschool, and Lasell Village, a senior living community focused on lifelong learning.

Lasell University's core curriculum, required of all students contains multiple requirements linked to civic engagement including:

- Articulate an informed understanding of the 'common good'
- Distinguish among civic engagement, justice, and service
- Identify resources that can be tapped to address societal challenges

Lasell University has a long-standing commitment to active citizenship in our local, state, national, and global community. More information on institutional efforts between 2016 – 2020 can be found in Lasell's 2020 ALL IN Action Plan. On campus, this work is supported by the Center for Community Based Learning (CCBL). The CCBL provides support and opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to engage with community organizations on mutually beneficial projects. Lasell students participate in one-time community service events as well as long-term continuous projects.

On campus, The Donahue Institute for Ethics, Diversity and Inclusion promotes social justice and global consciousness. The Donahue Institute fosters community and discourse on diversity through a wide range of events including lectures, discussion forums, films, theatre, and more. By promoting diversity and ethics on campus, the Donahue Institute fosters cross-cultural awareness and educates students to the issues faced by minority communities throughout the country and world.

In academic year 2023-2024, Lasell had a total student body of 1,541, with 1,152 undergraduates and 389 graduate students. Our undergraduate population represented 27 states and 10 countries, with 62% of our students being from in state (primarily the New England region) and 38% from out of state. Our graduate population represented 30 states and 12 countries, with 64% being from in state and 36% from out of state.

Though the population of students from minoritized and underrepresented backgrounds has been steadily increasing, Lasell is a predominantly white institution. In July 2023, Lasell welcomed a new President and Provost, both of whom are people of color. Academic Affairs has also undergone an organizational restructuring. With so many changes happening concurrently, the bandwidth and morale of the institution has been very fragile. Faculty members have expressed feeling too stretched to take on "another thing". Students have expressed apprehension about being involved in anything that has any connection to "politics".



AY 2023-2024 Campus Diversity
Undergraduate Student Population - Fall 2023

Race	Percentage	Race	Percentage
Asian	2.69%	Two or More Races	3.04%
Hispanic/Latino	14.5%	American Indian or Alaska Native	0.00%
International Students	1.91%	Black or African American	9.98%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.09%		
White	63.28%	Race and ethnicity unknown	4.51%

Graduate Student Population - Fall 2023

Race	Percentage	Race	Percentage
Asian	3.86%	Two or More Races	3.08%
Hispanic/Latino	2.83%	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.03%
International Students	5.66%	Black or African American	12.85%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%		
White	46.27%	Race and ethnicity unknown	24.42%

Source: Lasell University Website, Facts and Figures – Our Students

With the respect and trust the Lasell Votes Initiative has established, we hope to further engage faculty and more students in this voter and civic engagement work. Since efforts began in 2019, the initiative has achieved a positive uptrend in each election cycle. The institutional challenges of decreased enrollment, high employee turnover, and lower student engagement have presented the greatest barriers for Lasell Votes capacity and sustainability. There is not yet a designated budget for the initiative. Byrd has been successful in securing grants from Ask Every Student and Campus Takeover. These funds have greatly bolstered the initiatives’ ability to secure institutional support.

Lasell Votes is slowly becoming a common component of the institution’s ethos. We are working to meet students wherever they are in the electoral process and be of support to them and all community members through our foundation of nonpartisanship.



V | Goals

The three main goals of Lasell Votes are:

- to utilize best practices and creative formats to engage students in the electoral process
- to continually improve student voter registration and turnout rates (informed by the institution's NSLVE data)
- to institutionalize civic learning and action, as well as democratic engagement, throughout the institution

Short-Term Goals

- In 2024 Presidential election, achieve 100% registration rate by asking every student to register to vote
- In 2024 Presidential election, increase eligible student voter turnout rate 10 percentage points, moving from 68.3% in 2020 to 78.3% in 2024
- By October 2024, fill the open steering committee roles

Long-Term Goals

- Recruit 10 students to be Lasell Votes Ambassadors
- Continue cross-campus collaborations to offer inclusive and diverse programming aimed at extending our reach across the student population
- Increase programming for non-election years
- Create engagement opportunities for students that are ineligible to vote
- By 2026, increase voting rate to 50% for midterm elections
- Create open, inviting, and supportive campus climate and culture for civic learning and political engagement with multiple opportunities during and beyond elections

This action plan serves as a living document to be evaluated and updated before each election cycle.

VI | Strategy

Summer 2024

- Engage First Years and Push Registration
 - Integrate into first-year orientation programming by participating in resource fair and tabling during identified times in the sessions
 - Update internal LasellVotes site, including new digital tool, MotiVote
 - Send targeted emails with election information to all students
 - Recruit students to join Lasell Votes steering committee



Fall 2024

- Registration, Education, and Turn-out
 - Participate in Civic Holidays to build excitement and momentum
 - Provide voter engagement training to targeted student leader groups on campus, such as Resident Assistants (RAs), Peer Mentors, Athletic Team Captains, Club/Organizations Leaders, etc.
 - Classroom presentations and integration with pre-established campus touchpoints to reach wider audiences

Spring 2025

- Celebration and Preparation
 - Organize celebratory events to foster sense of campus pride
 - Assess action plan and update as necessary

VII | NSLVE

Our understanding of the Lasell student voting landscape began with an intentional review in 2019 of our campus specific data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report. We have since relied upon this data after each national election cycle to help inform our action plans.

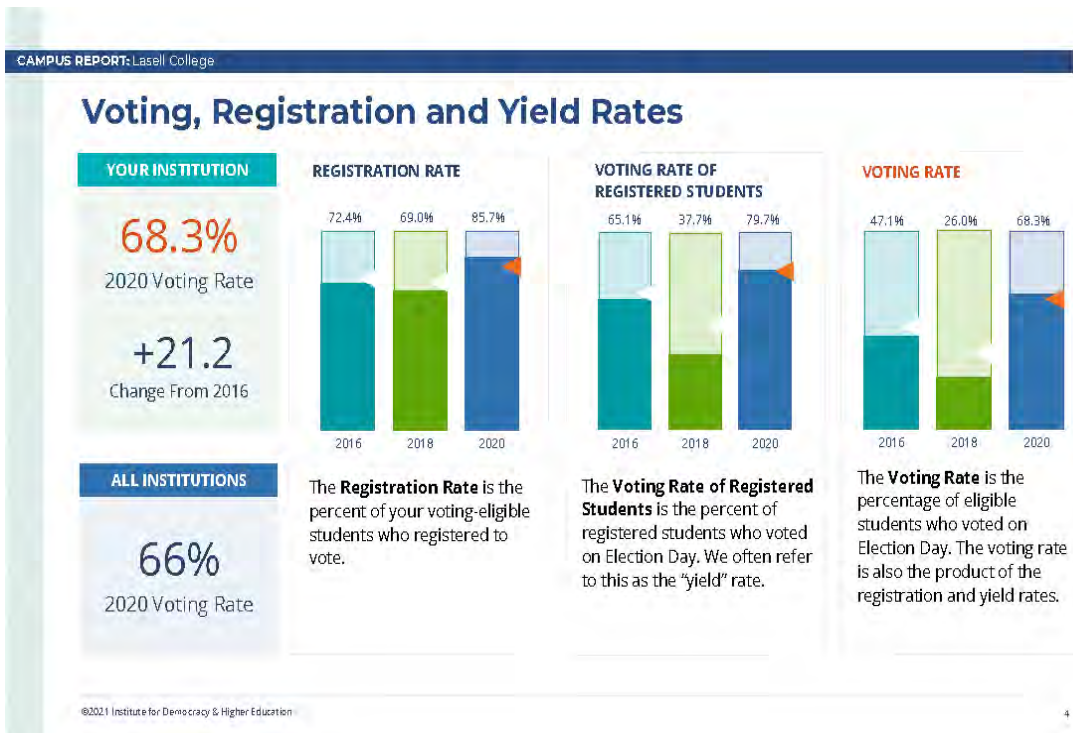
During our review in 2019, we found that our institution had traditionally seen voting rates just below the national average, with a much higher rate during Presidential Election years. In 2016, we had a 47.8% voter turnout, which was up 8.5% from the previous presidential election in 2012. However, it was below the national average of 50.4% for all institutions.

In the 2018 midterm elections, we had a much lower turnout with only 28.3% participation. While this was up 16% from the previous midterm election in 2014, it was well below the national average for all institutions, which was 39.8%. Our 2018 NSLVE data earned Lasell University a Bronze Seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. This recognition was used to ignite excitement around engagement efforts for the 2020 presidential election cycle. It also spurred our then President to commit our campus to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic posed obstacles to what we had planned for the 2020 election cycle, we adapted and persisted, resulting in a 68.3% overall voting rate, putting us slightly above the national average for all institutions. We subsequently earned a Silver Seal from ALL IN and received the Voter Friendly Campus Designation. This brought a lot of pride and excitement to our campus, and furthered brand recognition for the Lasell Votes initiative. It also helped us to learn how to effectively incorporate virtual components into our overall plan.

Our new President, Eric Turner, has fully endorsed our commitment to voter engagement and signed the Higher Education President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation. During the 2022 midterm elections, we continued utilizing a hybrid outreach and engagement strategy to enhance accessibility and inclusiveness. We will incorporate further learnings from the 2022 data once the NSLVE report is made available.

When the University receives the NSLVE Data, the Lasell Votes steering committee will meet with our Institutional Research Office to analyze the findings and determine how to best utilize the data to inform future actions. A presentation about the report will be given to the President, Provost, Senior Management Team, and Student Government Association. With input from these stakeholders, we will develop a strategy to utilize the data as a campus tool for further electoral engagement efforts. The report will be posted internally on the Lasell Votes intranet page and Canvas module. Externally, we will authorize our NSLVE report to be posted through ALL IN.



VIII | Reporting

In the spring semester, the Lasell Votes steering committee will present their findings to the President, Provost, and other members of the Senior Management Team of the University. Information will be shared with the wider campus community at the institution's annual academic symposium. This action plan will live within the Center for Community Based Learning (CCBL). It will be available on Canvas and the institution's internal intranet site. The Lasell Votes committee will work with the University's Communication and Marketing department to distribute the information externally when appropriate. Additionally, the action plan will be available to the public on the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge website.



IX | Evaluation

Voter Engagement across Campus

- Number of students, faculty, and staff who volunteer with the initiative
- Number of campus partners who work with the initiative

Voter Registration

- Number of tabling events
- Number of students registering at events
- MotiVote digital tool and customized voter portal data to track registrations and call to action engagements
- NSLVE data to see any rise in percentage of students registered Voter

Education

- Number of classroom visits
- Number of election engagement related events
- Number of students in attendance at events

Voter Ballot Access

- Number of students who submit for an absentee ballot from outreach efforts

Voter Turnout

- Number of students who complete vote plan
- Number of students who vote early
- NSLVE data to see any rise in percentage of students voting
- Data from a post-election survey

The Lasell Votes initiative will work to accomplish the goals outlined in this plan through collaboration with students, clubs/organizations, faculty, staff, administration, local government, and national organizations. We are committed to supporting student participation in every election and increasing student involvement in the Lasell Votes initiative.