

Manhattan College 2024 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Margaret Groarke and the Voter Engagement Team



Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by the Voter Engagement Committee of Manhattan College in New York for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 presidential election, and to begin to develop the calendar for future years. The goals for Manhattan College for the 2024 election are:

- Create easy access to information on registration, applying for an absentee ballot, and voting.
- Register 50 students through our custom voter registration portal in 2024.
- Pay particular attention to the Biology Department and the School of Engineering
- Increase student voter turnout rate to 62% in 2024, up from 59.6% in 2020.
- Increase student voter registration rate to 80% in 2024, up from 76.4% in 2020.
- Evaluate our 2022 NSLVE results, once available, in order to continually increase voting and turnout.

Our longer-term goals are to

- Institutionalize voter registration as part of the First Year Orientation process
- Grow the number of campus stakeholders who are committed to the Voter Engagement Committee
- Continue a regular cycle of developing voter engagement action plans, implementing them and evaluating them, over the next five years.

Leadership Team:

Margaret Groarke ★ Professor of Political Science, Coordinator of Community Engaged Learning

Kaitlyn McDonald ★ Student, Voter Engagement Advocate

Maria Galindo ★ Student, Voter Engagement Advocate

Rebecca Wilson ★ Student Athlete & Black Student Union Secretary

Liam Hull ★ Graduate Assistant in Athletics Department

Michael Steele ★ Assistant Director of Student Engagement and Director of the Multicultural Center

Ramdat Singh ★ 81st Assembly District Leader

Tyla Boone ★ Student, Representative from the Women and Gender Resource Center

Samantha Pavlick ★ Student, Political Science

Succession plan: The leaders listed above are part of a larger Voter Engagement Committee. Every fall, we will review the list of leaders and active participants, to determine who is still at the College and committed to the project. We will extend invitations to people we think we should have as part of the team. For example, we will always invite the leadership of Student Government and the staff of the Student Engagement Office to participate. We will also extend a general invitation (through our Instagram, College Announcements and flyers) to all members of the College community to get involved.

Our campus works with the following nonprofit partners: The League of Women Voters, Bronx Chapter, and NYC Chapter, All In Campus Democracy Challenge. Our campus also works with the Bronx Board of Elections.

Commitment:



Manhattan College’s mission is to “provide a contemporary, person-centered educational experience that prepares graduates for lives of personal development, professional success, civic engagement, and service to their fellow human beings.” and thus it is appropriate that the college encourage eligible students to participate in national elections.

In addition, Manhattan College complies with the 1998 Federal Higher Education Act and the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act, which requires colleges and universities to make a good faith effort to distribute voter registration forms, or electronic access to voter registration forms, to all students in years of federal or gubernatorial elections, and to make such forms widely available to students.

For these reasons, President Brennan O’Donnell signed the Higher Education Presidents’ Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation, and authorized the College’s participation in NSLVE in September 2016. President Milo Rivero renewed the College’s Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation in November 2023 (seen in the photo with students and our campus mascot). Recognizing the responsibility of colleges and universities to prepare students to be informed and active citizens, and the importance of the student voice in elections, President Rivero encourages the college community to consider the ways curricular and extra-curricular experiences can support the development of students to become lifelong voters and engaged participants in their communities.



Manhattan College earned a Bronze seal for its participation rate in the 2018 election, and a Silver seal for participation in the 2020 election. The President's signing of the Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation and the Bronze and Silver seals were announced in the College's daily Announcements (emailed to everyone in the campus community and available on the College website), and included in public-facing news items on the website, and external press releases.

Phase II of the College's Strategic Plan, which ended recently, included significant initiatives to encourage local and global civic engagement, through teaching, research and service, and in particular to promote collaboration with professional and community-based organizations, service-learning, and volunteer work. Phase III, which has just begun, we plan to enhance our intentional engagement with local, national and global partners. Under both the current strategic plan and the one we are about to begin, we believe the strategic initiatives support a strong effort around voter registration and participation.

The college's commitment to local and global civic engagement has led to course-embedded projects that encourage students to be civically involved. The college's commitment to community engaged learning is represented by employing a faculty Coordinator of Community Engaged Learning (25% appointment). Classes that have recently focused on civic engagement include English 262, Gender and Literature with Dr. Maeve Adams, and Communication 419, Advanced TV Production with Dr. Michael Grabowski, and Political Science 153, "Participation and Power" with Dr. Margaret Groarke. Manhattan College's mission is to "provide a contemporary, person-centered educational experience that prepares graduates for lives of personal development, professional success, civic engagement, and service to their fellow human beings. and thus it is appropriate that the college encourage eligible students to participate in national elections.

Landscape and Demographics:

Manhattan College is a private 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2016.

Manhattan College has 2928 undergraduates and 578 graduate students, studying on a single campus in the Bronx. The campus is relatively small; it has 23 acres of land, and two areas of campus that are connected by a student commons building.

Manhattan College is more male than female, with about 57.8% of its students being men and 42.2% women. The majority of students on campus are white, more specifically 46.2%. Outside of the majority, 28.5% of the students on campus are Hispanic, 6.4% are Black or African American, 4.6% are Asian, 3.1% are two or more races, 0.2% are American Indian or Alaska Native and 7.6% are unknown. The college has students from more than 60 U.S. states and territories. The vast majority, more than 70%, are from the tristate area. There are significant numbers of students as well from NJ and Connecticut.

We try to collaborate with many student organizations and offices on campus. Campus Ministry and the Social Action (CMSA) is located in the student commons building, connecting students to volunteer opportunities and providing easier access to different social justice events happening in Manhattan. 36.04% of the students in a survey replied that they were involved in at least one of the activities offered by the CMSA during their time attending the school. The Multicultural Center is also located in the student commons building, creating programs for students that help build community on campus. CMSA, the Multicultural Center, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Black Student Union, Commuter Student Association, Women and Gender Resource Center, WRCM Radio, and The Quadrangle newspaper are already involved in our efforts, and we intend to invite all the other organizations to be involved. Athletics is also very interested in collaborating with us, and we are in touch with the MAAC Votes network.

Currently 35% of students are residents on campus and 65% are commuters, and we need to plan to meet the needs of both groups. Students who do not vote locally may not know about or even know how to request an absentee ballot so that they can vote in upcoming elections. As described in the previous paragraph, almost a quarter of the students that attend Manhattan College are residents of other states than New York. Updates on New York State elections are irrelevant to students registered in their home state. Furthermore, even for students living in New York, all students living outside of the Bronx and are not registered with Manhattan College as their address are not able to vote in the local elections which are also important. Keeping students well informed about their upcoming election dates and about the politicians running in their areas is therefore a challenging task.

Commuters face different challenges than resident students. With extracurricular activities and a heavy workload, commuter students have a lot of work to get done when they are not in their classes and less time to do them than other college students due to the time they spend commuting. Commuters may not feel they have time to keep themselves well informed on political issues and upcoming elections. Additionally, commuters may not feel that they have the time to stay on campus once their classes are over. This may make it harder to reach out to this group through events, especially if they are later in the evening. For these reasons, it is probably best to make voter information easily accessible, such as through Instagram, so that commuters can use the Voter Engagement Committee as a resource on their own schedule.

Roughly a third of students at Manhattan College are low income. For these students, finding time to vote between school and work, and paying any additional travel costs that might be involved, might discourage voter participation. Students in general don't seem to keep postage stamps on hand, which may be needed to mail registration forms and absentee ballots. These are issues we need to consider in our plans.

Our NSLVE reports and what we learned from them:

	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
Registration rate	65.4%	54.5%	72.8%	53.9%	76.4%
Turnout of registered students	53.0%	15.2%	61.7%	41.9%	78.1%
Turnout rate of eligible students	34.7%	8.3%	44.9%	22.5%	59.6%
Turnout rate at all institutions	46.9%	18.8%	50.4%	39.1%	66%

The voter registration and turnout rates, in the table above, reflect the percentage of Manhattan College students who were eligible to vote and have voted in the 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections.

Our institution has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals: 2018 Bronze, 2020 Silver. We are also very proud of Kiambra D. Griffin, who was a women’s basketball coach here in 2020, and was recognized by All In as a 2020 Standout Athletic Coach. (She now works for the WNBA).

We’ve seen that our work to engage students in 2016, 2018, and 2020 has had a positive impact on our overall registration and turnout rates. We unfortunately do not have the data to examine demographic differences in registration and turnout among our students, but we can look at majors. The academic areas with the highest % turnout in 2020 were Education, Communication, History, Social Sciences and Kinesiology/Education. We saw the biggest increase in Social Sciences and Kinesiology/Physical Education. The majors that appear to have the lowest participation rates are Philosophy, Religious Studies, Fine Arts, and Biology. While the Philosophy, Religious Studies and Fine Arts majors are quite small and may be discontinued, Biology is a significant group of majors. The catch-all area of “Liberal Arts and Sciences - Humanities” which we assume includes those liberal arts programs not specifically listed elsewhere, is also quite low. We can focus on these areas as we plan our outreach this spring and fall. We also want to focus some attention on Engineering, as students in our engineering programs are geographically in a different part of campus and we want to make sure not to leave them out of our plans.

While we are still awaiting the NSLVE report on 2022 turnout, we believe that the College submitted better data on the gender and race of our student population by that point, and so we hope to get more information on the demographics of our voting population from that report.

Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals for 2024 are:

- Increase student voter turnout rate to 25% in 2022 and 62% in 2024.
- Increase student voter registration rate to 70% in 2022 and 80% in 2024.
- Register 50 students through our custom voter registration portal in 2024.
- Pay particular attention to the Biology Department and the School of Engineering
- Educate students about the primaries, the election and the candidates so they feel confident voting.

(Although the 2022 election has passed, we are leaving the 2022 registration and turnout goals in our plan so that we can assess our progress when the 2022 NSLVE results are available, which we hope will happen in early 2024.)

Making longer term goals is more challenging, and we will be better able to make concrete goals when we see what we are able to do this year. We have laid out a calendar of upcoming elections – municipal, state and national – around which we would like to make plans to engage voters. For the moment, our longer-term goals are to:

- Institutionalize voter registration as part of the First Year Orientation process
- Grow the number of campus stakeholders who are committed to the Voter Engagement Committee
- Continue a regular cycle of developing voter engagement action plans, implementing them and evaluating them, over the next five years.

We will revisit and refine these goals in the spring of 2025, as we evaluate our work in the 2024 election.

Strategy:

We recognize that, to increase turnout, we need to:

- make sure students have access to registration and to the vote (whether that be by absentee ballot or in person),
- be motivated to participate, and
- have the information to feel they are prepared to make a good choice.

The Manhattan College Voter Engagement Committee will implement nonpartisan strategies to address these three aspects of increasing democratic engagement and student voter participation.

Campus Ministry Social Action has hired two work study students to work on voter engagement tasks. These students are tabling on campus, posting information about voting and elections, and otherwise working on increasing voter engagement on campus. They also organize the meetings of the Voter Engagement Committee, and try to mobilize other student volunteers and other organizations on campus to work on voter engagement.

A big part of our strategy is encouraging various student organizations, academic departments and other offices within the College to do their part to encourage voting and share information about election dates and logistics. Most significantly, our Athletics Department is participating in the MAAC Votes effort, and asking its student athletes to pledge to vote. The Multicultural Center has promised to include voter engagement info in each of the 4 events they have planned for this spring.

Manhattan College will take advantage of the Civic Holidays to promote our work. We will host a voter engagement festival on the Quad in the spring (most likely on April 10) and in the fall on National Voter Registration Day (as we did in 2022), with a DJ from the College radio station, games, opportunities to register to vote and learn about the election, snacks and ice cream.

We post information on our Instagram and the College's announcement system about registration deadlines, getting an absentee ballot, early voting and Election Day. We also flyer the campus about these deadlines.

We were gifted a free, Manhattan College specific portal for voter registration by All In, and we have posted the QR code for it widely. In the spring 2024, we will be doing short in-class presentations about why and how you should register to vote, and we will be using the portal to register students. Although we only registered 20 people through the portal in 2023, we aim to register 50 people through the portal in 2024.

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

When we receive our NSLVE data for the 2022 election, we will review it to see how we can improve our efforts. We have previously been unable to provide the Clearinghouse with gender and race data, but thanks to repeated requests and the heightened efforts of the Institutional Research team to generate more useful data, we expect to be able to look at participation by gender and race in the 2022 election. Unfortunately

the NSLVE data is very delayed and so we do not know when we will get it. We will do so again with the 2024 results.

We are also making use of our portal to monitor our progress in registering students. When we table or offer voter registration at an event, we can track the number of people who register through our portal afterwards. This helps us evaluate which opportunities to register voters are more productive than others.

We will also convene periodic meetings of our Voter Engagement Committee to review data from our portal (which will show us how many students have used our portal to register), to coordinate efforts different campus organizations may plan to promote voting, and to organize participation in events that we plan.

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website (our previous ones are all posted there). <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/manhattan-college/>. Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our NSLVE reports which are posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website.

Our 2020 and 2022 action plans are on our website, and our 2024 plan will shortly be added. Our 2020 NSLVE report is posted on our website. We always announce (on the announcements portal that is seen by the entire campus) our NSLVE report, and we email it directly to all senior administrators and all members of our voter engagement committee. We devote a meeting of the voter engagement committee to the analysis of the report, and discussion of how we could do better in the next cycle.

Primary Elections of 2024:

We will focus on the three states from which the largest number of students come to Manhattan College, but we will also share the entire primary calendar with the College community.

NEW YORK

Presidential Primary Date: APRIL 2ND

Early Voting: March 23rd-March 31st

Register By: March 18th

Absentee Ballot (Online Request): March 18th

Absentee Ballot (In-Person Request): April 1st

NEW JERSEY

Presidential Primary Date: JUNE 4TH

Early Voting: May 25th-June 2nd

Register By: May 14th

Absentee Ballot (In-Person Request): June 4th

CONNECTICUT

Presidential Primary Date: APRIL 2ND

Early Voting: March 18th-March 31st

Register By: April 2nd

Absentee Ballot (In-Person Request): April 2nd

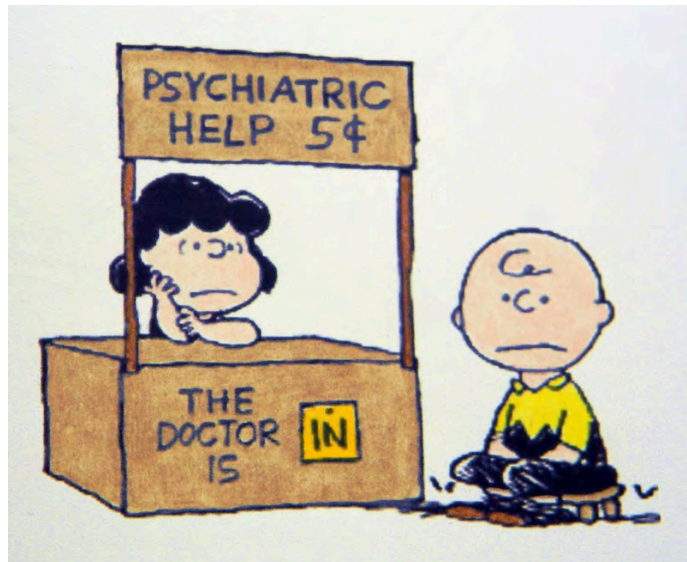
Plan of activities:

SPRING 2024

Priorities: Registering students to vote, Educating students about the primaries, Encouraging students to vote in the primaries, with a focus on April 2 (NY and CT) and June 4 (NJ)

- Event: "Primary Season: what is happening?" Discussion with Dr. Keller and Groarke
- Meet with Lisa Gattis of the Bronx Board of Elections
- Reach out to Dominicanos USA, an organization that works on citizenship, voter registration and voter education

- Lucy/Charlie Brown Event – set up a booth to answer election questions and help people register
- Plan an event with ASME in the Leo Lounge
- Collaborate with other clubs, sororities and fraternities, offer to make presentations at club meetings, and talk with clubs about things we might do together.
- Plan some voter reg thing to happen at Jasper Wellness Day, which is April 16
- The Multicultural Center will be holding 3-4 events in the spring, and promised to include voter engagement info in each of them



- Informational instagram posts (electoral college, etc)
- Week of March 4th – Invite NY residents to request their absentee ballots (deadline is March 18, but we will be on break the week of March 11).
- In mid April, we will hold a Voter Power festival to encourage voter participation.
- Tabling – registering students to vote, helping people request absentee ballots – in various spaces on campus – Kelly Commons, Leo Lounge, the Quad (in decent weather), and Thomas Hall.
- Classroom/Team/Club Presentations

FALL 2024

- National Voter Registration Day, September 17, 2024. We will hold a Voter Power Festival on the Quad, with music, snacks, games, voter registration opportunities and info about the coming election.
- We will work with Athletics to make a plan to register unregistered student-athletes and encourage them to vote.
- We will plan activities for Voter Education Week, 9/30–10/04. We'll bring our Lucy Brown booth to a few campus locations this week.
- Mini microphone interviews – record various people saying why they intend to vote
- We will hold an event, tentatively titled, “The 2024 Election: What to watch out for.” during voter education week.
- General Election 2024 is November 5. Publicize Election Day, early voting, and remind people to request absentee ballots
- Tabling – registering students to vote, helping people request absentee ballots – in various spaces on campus – Kelly Commons, Leo Lounge, the Quad (in decent weather), and Thomas Hall.
- Classroom/Team/Club Presentations
- Plan a debate watch party or an election night watch party

SPRING 2025

- Evaluate our activities in 2024 – what worked, what didn't? What would we do again, what would we change?
- The NYC primaries for Mayor and City Council will be on June 25, 2025.
- Make a plan to promote participation in the NYC mayoral primaries and general election.
- Hold a planning session for the Voter Engagement Committee specifically focused on imagining longer term goals.

FALL 2025

- Evaluate our NSLVE report – how well did we do in increasing registration and turnout at MC?
Where are the areas we'd like to work on improving?
- Voter Engagement Committee will hold meetings to draft an Action Plan for 2026, with a goal of submitting it in December 2025.
- NYC Mayoral and municipal Election – November 4, 2025

SPRING 2026

- Congressional Primaries, exact dates TBD

FALL 2026

- Midterm Congressional Election and NYS Gubernatorial Election, November 2026