



Mercyhurst University 2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Bethany Woods

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Mercyhurst University in Pennsylvania 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 election. The goals for Mercyhurst University for the 2024 election are:

- Increase voter registration by XX% by providing at least four (4) tabling opportunities for students to register
- Increase student notifications about voting rights by 400%
- Host at least four (4) tabling opportunities for students to learn about their individual states' voting resources
- Provide transportation on election day to the local precinct for those voting locally

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following, campus groups, and organizations:

Bethany Woods – Director of Academic Community Engagement
Dr. Greg Baker – Vice President for Mission
Campus Vote Project
League of Women Voters
Dr. Laura Zirkle – Vice President for Student Life
Police & Safety
Dr. Kathy Getz – President, Mercyhurst University

Commitment:

Mission Statement: Consistent with its Catholic Identity and Mercy heritage, Mercyhurst University educates diverse persons in a culture where faith and reason flourish together, where the beauty and power of the liberal arts combine with an appreciation for the dignity of work and a commitment to serving others. Confident in the strength of its student-faculty bonds, the

university community is inspired by the image of students whose choices, in life and work, will enable them to realize the human and spiritual values embedded in everyday realities and to exercise leadership in service toward a just world.

Mercyhurst is home to the nationally renowned Center for Applied Politics. The Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics (MCAP) began operations in July 2010. Inspired by the mission of Mercyhurst University and guided by the college's core values, the center promotes reasoned discourse about problems facing communities, states and nations. It accomplishes this objective by providing elected officials, government agencies, news organizations, and nonprofits with accurate and unbiased assessments of public opinion; and offering a nonpartisan forum for public debates and roundtable discussions that address pressing public problems.

Mercyhurst has annually sent out an email notice to all students in September reminding them of their ability to exercise their right to vote locally or in their home state and provides links to an internal resource that provides information on how to register.

Mercyhurst University does not have a current signatory to ALL IN's Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation, but we are addressing that issue at this time.

This is the first action plan that our institution has developed for ALL IN.

Landscape:

- Erie County has utilized the Dominion Voting System since 2020. Registered voters may opt to complete a paper ballot or may utilize an accessible touchscreen device available at all polling locations. Once either option is completed, the voter will cast their completed ballot by placing it in the ImageCast Precinct Scanner.
- Last day to register to vote in Erie County is October 21st.
- Last day to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot in Erie County is October 29th.
- Pennsylvania does not generally require voters to present identification while voting. However, a voter who is voting at a polling place for the first time must present identification.

Mercyhurst University is a private 4 year nonprofit Catholic institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2024. Our institution is designated as the following: Predominantly White Institution

Our campus demographic and voting data:

- Mercyhurst University has 2790 students
- 40% male, 50% female
- 42% out of state residents
- 75% residential
- 73% traditional college age (18-21)

Mercyhurst University authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) in August 2024.

Mercyhurst University participates in the following initiatives to support the development and implementation of our nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts on campus:

- National Voter Registration Day
- Voter registration resources in our Community Engagement office
- Voter registration tabling opportunities throughout September and October
- Transportation to/from local polling location on Election Day

Goals:

Our institution's nonpartisan democratic engagement goals are:

- Increase student voter turnout rate to 50% in 2024 and 80% in 2026.
- Increase student voter registration rate to 50% in 2024 and 75% in 2026.
- Increase student voter registration opportunities by providing at least 4 tabling sessions during September and October.
- Add a voter registration hub in the Community Engagement department
- Have our president/chancellor sign the ALL IN Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation by September 2024.

Strategy:

Mercyhurst University will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

- Participate in National Voter Registration Day on September 17th
- Host Tabling Tuesdays from September 17th through October 21st to allow students to register to vote
- Create QR codes and signs for employees to post outside their offices to indicate they are willing to help a student register to vote
- Encourage student and employee volunteers to help with voter registration through presentations at Staff Senate, Faculty Senate, and Mercyhurst Student Government.
- Provide transportation on Election day to local polling site

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

Mercyhurst University has authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) and will therefore receive campus voting data moving forward to help with the evaluation of our action plan and nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts.

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website
<https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/mercyhurst-university/>.

Mercyhurst University has given ALL IN permission to publish our past NSLVE reports, which can also be found on our campus page above.