



Middlebury College

Center for Community Engagement

ALL IN Challenge campus action plan Middlebury College 2018-2019

At Middlebury, our commitment to civically engaged learning opportunities derives from our conviction that liberal education is rightly understood as learning in, with, and for the world. A commitment to engaged learning derives from our historic identity as “the Town’s College,” an acknowledgement that from our institution’s beginnings we have been connected with the community and world around us...Consistent with our history of civically engaged learning, our current Envisioning Middlebury process calls us to “a commitment to immersive learning” that readies students “to lead engaged, consequential, and creative lives,” through which they may “contribute to their communities, and address the world’s most challenging problems.” Together we have imagined a Middlebury education that prepares students deeply for the responsibilities of ethical citizenship in “a robust public sphere.” We have identified place-based experiential learning, intercultural competency, and other priorities as essential academic experiences for students to realize the civically minded aspirations for liberal education embodied at Middlebury. And, we have committed to making these opportunities available to all of our students, as shared features of their “full participation in a diverse [academic] community.”

- excerpt from the [Middlebury College Civic Action Plan](#), September 2017

Summary

As this excerpt from the Middlebury College Civic Action Plan demonstrates, at the heart of our institutional mission is a commitment to providing students with the skills and opportunities to engage as ethical citizens through both curricular and co-curricular experiences.

In addition to the skills learned inside the classroom, student organizations on campus foster civic engagement amongst the student body. MiddVote, a student-run nonpartisan initiative advised through the Center for Community Engagement, aims to encourage the College to continue to prioritize civic engagement on campus. MiddVote’s primary focus is registering students to vote and preparing the student body for Election Day. This involves hosting voter registration drives, as well as providing transportation to the polls for students who are registered in Vermont. Listed below are concrete goals and actions steps that the Center for Community Engagement and MiddVote will spearhead in the upcoming year.

Voter Engagement:

- **Increasing voter engagement.** We hope to increase our student voter participation by *at least* 5% in the 2018 mid-term elections compared with the rate from the 2014 mid-term elections. We will utilize NSLVE data to assess our voter participation rate increase. Between the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections, our voting rate increased by 8.4% to a total of 58.1%.
- **Changing our registration system.** While we previously relied on online platforms to register students to vote and sign them up for absentee ballots, we will be switching to a paper system (following Northwestern University’s successful model). During spring semester 2018, we will

host 3-4 practice drives to test out this new system and perfect it before the fall semester. In the fall, we will host multiple registration drives in advance of the midterm in November 2018.

- **Reaching students before they arrive on campus.** We have already added a voter registration link on the orientation checklist for incoming February admits and we hope to do the same for the September admits in fall 2018.
- **Access to the polls.** We plan to offer a shuttle bus system to the local polling location and work on ways to remind students who are registered in Vermont to vote on election day.

Civic Education:

- **Hosting speakers on campus.** We hope to facilitate speakers on campus who can inspire students to engage in the voting process. We hope Professor Nancy Thomas, Director of the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education at Tufts University, can visit campus in either spring 2018 or fall 2018 to speak with students, faculty, and staff about the responsibility of higher education institutions to encourage students to vote.
- **Incorporating voting into the classroom.** We will be working with the various academic departments to find way to educate students on their responsibility to be involved in their communities and to vote, if eligible. One idea is to ask professors to place major voter registration deadlines on their course syllabi.

Student Recruitment:

- **New student leaders.** As current leadership prepares for graduation, MiddVote will be focusing on recruiting students to help organize these events. We hope to create a team of dedicated changemakers who can meet students where they are and make voter registration even more accessible.

NESCAC Network:

- **Create a network of peer institutions.** Through this network, we hope to learn about the practices used by other institutions similar to Middlebury.
- **Foster friendly competition.** In advance of the 2018 midterm and 2020 general elections, the NESCAC schools could compete in a friendly competition to see who could register the most students. This project could help create a broader New England small college community and register more students to vote.

Create New Campus Partners:

- **Reach out to groups on campus to help us champion voting.** We hope to create relationships with other student organizations on campus, such as athletics, clubs, and other student-led projects. We have already built a strong relationship with some of the political organizations on campus, but it's time to create new relationships, as well as maintaining our existing ones.

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