

Middlebury 2020 Action Plan

Summary

This Campus Action Plan was developed by student leaders of MiddVote, Middlebury's non-partisan civic engagement group, as well as staff members of the Middlebury College Center for Community Engagement and the Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS) Civic Engagement Fellow. This plan is a continuation of student and staff efforts to increase election engagement, voter participation, and education at Middlebury campuses. MiddVote, Middlebury College and MIIS are all deeply committed to inclusivity, equity, and non-partisanship. Our Action Plan was developed with the goal of increasing voting participation, education, and empowerment in the Middlebury Community during the 2020 primary elections, general election, and beyond. The development of this plan has been aided by resources from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and the Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition. Our plan is intentionally student-led and student focused, because we believe the most effective organizing efforts center the leadership of the communities they focus on.

Institutional Context

At the heart of Middlebury's institutional mission lies a commitment to providing students with the skills and opportunities to engage as ethical citizens. Middlebury's mission statement says that "we prepare students to lead engaged, consequential, and creative lives, contribute to their communities, and address the world's most challenging problems." We believe that empowered participation in our democracy, when possible, is an essential piece of community. Middlebury also works to foster "the inquiry, equity, and agency, for them [students] to practice ethical citizenship at home and far beyond our Vermont campus."

By empowering students to vote and be engaged in local and national government, we embody Middlebury's mission. Middlebury uses the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, (NSLVE) to measure election participation among students. According to NSLVE, in the 2018 midterm elections, Middlebury had a voting rate of 51%, a 36% increase from our voting rate in the 2014 midterm elections. Between the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections, Middlebury's voting rate rose by 8.4%. Because of Middlebury's voting history, we believe that our efforts have made a significant difference in increasing voter participation, and that we have the capacity to continue those increases. We hope to build upon our momentum in 2020 and beyond.

Operating as a student organization, MiddVote is managed by a group of undergraduates in collaboration with the Middlebury College Center for Community engagement. MiddVote leadership is predominantly horizontal, with democratic leadership within the group and one paid student acting as the formal liaison between the Middlebury College Center for Community Engagement and the rest of the group. MiddVote works with a coalition of members from the Middlebury community who are united by their shared commitment to increasing election engagement and civic participation. Our partners will include traditional campus political groups, as well as cultural organizations, activist organizations, athletic teams, performing arts groups, administrative groups, Middlebury College Student Government Organization, faculty, staff, and administration. While MiddVote is largely undergraduate, we work in collaboration with Jasmine, the Democratic Engagement fellow at MIIS. MiddVote is nonpartisan and strives to

include voices from across the political spectrum, including those who have not participated in the political process in the past.

Goals

Create and foster a sustainable campus infrastructure that will support the following outcomes among Middlebury College students:

- **Election participation**
 - Register students to vote. By 2020, 90% of Middlebury students who are eligible U.S. voters will be registered.
 - Increase student voter turnout. In the 2020 general election, 80% of Middlebury students who are eligible U.S. voters will vote.
 - Create initiatives for all students, eligible and otherwise, to engage in election day activities (volunteering, election parties, etc.)
- **Voter Education & Empowerment**
 - Educate new Addison County, Vermont voters and Monterey County, California voters on local issues and candidates
 - Educate all students on the issues and candidates that will be on their ballots
 - Foster an awareness among Middlebury students about voter suppression, disenfranchisement, and the history of activism that led to expansions of voting rights
 - Hold events and campaigns about civic engagement that are inclusive of students who are not eligible to vote in the U.S.
- **Development & Expansion of MiddVote**
 - Reach more spaces, groups, and communities on campus with our election engagement efforts
 - Develop materials to help students decide whether to vote in VT, CA, or their home state
 - Reach new students at multiple points during orientation and the first semester of school, and work with Residential Life and Student Services (MIIS) to make this practice permanent
 - Recruit new volunteers and empower them to run voter registration drives and other events with skill and confidence
 - Develop and promote a MiddVote website with resources on registering to vote, requesting ballots, and learning about upcoming elections, candidates, and issues for all 50 states
 - Work with Renee Wells, Middlebury's Director for Equity and Inclusion, to develop programming to help faculty facilitate inclusive discussions about elections
 - Develop effective and inclusive language to encourage students and community members to participate in elections
- **Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement**
 - Select and implement targeted strategies from *Election Imperatives* and *Election 365* designed to deepen a culture of civic learning on campus

Strategy

Below is a general timeline of the tactics we will employ to accomplish these goals.

Winter/Spring 2020

Action Item
Hold at least 5 voter registration drives across campus at varying locations and campus events in order to reach as many students as possible. <i>Ongoing</i>
Start to debrief after voter registration drives to help volunteers get questions answered about registration <i>Ongoing</i>
Change name to <i>MiddVotes</i> prior to incoming Feb arrival and future pushes; apply for funding to rebrand with new posters, materials, etc. <i>December</i>
Hold one fun MiddVote social event for volunteers <i>Jterm</i>
Table at the activities fair for incoming Febs <i>February 2020</i>
Table at spring Club Fair to recruit volunteers and raise awareness of 2020 initiatives (MIIS)
Work with Res life to see if we can table on orientation next fall --academic fair <i>March-April 2020</i>
Work with Student Athletic Advisory Committee to do team-specific drives <i>Ongoing</i>
Develop a "where should I vote?" guide to help students decide whether to register in VT or their home state <i>Ongoing</i>
Host a voting party at Middlebury High School the day before town meeting/election day March 3rd <i>March 2020</i>
Develop a go/middvote website with resources for registering, requesting ballots, deciding where to vote, learning about election law/voter suppression, learning what will be on ballots, ect. Make a QR code for the website so students can scan and get it <i>Ongoing</i>

Have a voter registration table set up at the 2020 Gensler symposium

April 2020

Work with Renee Wells to develop training for faculty on how to have inclusive conversations about 2020 election

Ongoing

Meet with SGA External Affairs Committee to determine what role they can play institutionally

Ongoing

Summer 2020

Action Item

Write targeted state-by-state emails to be sent in the fall

Ongoing- Done by Sept

Develop a slide deck that faculty can use to inform classes about how to vote

Ongoing

Create a “what you can do beyond voting” w/info on how to contact reps, how to volunteer in Addison county, and the different service, political & activism orgs you can get involved with on campus

Ongoing

Create a “voting in Middlebury” guide to help educate new Middlebury voters (both logistical info and candidate info)

Ongoing

September 2020

Action Item

Table at move in day and freshman optional activities

Sept 8-11

September 22: National Voter Registration Day. Extend this into National Voter Registration week. Table across campus at various locations simultaneously, have events with music, food trucks and t shirt making.

Sept 21-25th

Reach out to cultural orgs and political & advocacy orgs so we can come to meetings and talk about National Voter Registration week

<i>Ongoing</i>
Table at popular campus activities such as the WRMC/MCAB fall concert, the all-student barbeque, and the Quidditch classic. All other tabling- National Voter Reg WEEK! <i>Ongoing</i>
Have students sign pledge to vote cards at events and include their emails so we can send follow up reminders <i>Sept 21-25th</i>
Do a first social media takeover of the Middlebury College instagram to advertise National Voter Registration week <i>Sept 19-25th</i>
Partner with college Dems & Republicans to host a presidential debate watch party

October 2020

Action Item
Provide free stamps in the mail center, residential offices, and library for students to send ballots <i>Oct 15-Nov 3</i>
Host a public art competition to see who can make the best piece/sculpture that says "vote" <i>Early Oct</i>
Work with the Middlebury Campus (newspaper) to get voting info in the paper/make another election issue <i>Mid-October</i>
Host four registration drives in different locations across campus <i>Ongoing</i>
Work with residential life staff to have registration events in dorm res life offices or dorm common rooms <i>Ongoing</i>
Host a MiddVote voting trivia night at one of the MCAB Thursday trivia nights <i>Early October</i>
Create a poster or photo series "I vote because..." or "I want you to vote because..." <i>Mid-October</i>
Plaster the campus with reminders about requesting and sending in absentee ballots!

Mid-Late Oct

Create napkin dispenser cards with info about same-day voting in VT/ reminder to vote
Late Oct

November 2020

Action Item

First week until election day: do a second social media takeover of the Middlebury College instagram
Oct 27-Nov 3

Have the Middlebury Campus (newspaper) run a picture of the VT ballot with instructions on how to fill it out
October 29

Partner with local businesses/orgs to put out voting reminders starting the Friday before election day
Oct 31-Nov 3

Table outside of dining halls the 2 days before election day to advertise same day voting in VT and info about the Middlebury ballot
Nov 1-3

ELECTION DAY

Action Item

Table outside of dining halls to encourage students to go vote
8-2pm 430-7pm

Run a shuttle to the polls leaving ADK every hour
7am-7pm

Run a shuttle to polls leaving Samson every hour (MIIS)
7am-7pm

Have volunteers make announcements in the beginning of classes
Ongoing

Host a #VoteTogether party outside of the polls with food and music
5pm-9pm

Host a #VoteTogether party with food and music
5pm-9pm

Co-sponsor an election watch-party with college Dems and college Republicans <i>8pm - 1130 pm</i>
Sponsor an election watch-party <i>8pm-1130</i>

Evaluation & Reporting

Middlebury College uses the NSLVE report to evaluate student voting rates. We will also use an anonymous student survey after the election sent out to the entire student body asking the following questions: are you an eligible US voter? Are you registered to vote? Did you vote? Why or why not? What would have made it easier for you to vote? After the election, we will hold several meetings with the MiddVote team as well as one meeting open to the public to discuss the effectiveness of various initiatives and events.

Some other measures we will use to evaluate our success are as follows:

- 2020 voting rate (% of eligible students that voted)
- # of people we helped register or request ballot
- # of days tabled
- # of consistent student volunteers
- # of riders in the election day shuttles
- # of student groups we worked with

The results of our evaluation will be used to inform future efforts and plans.