

Middlebury College 2022 Democratic Action Plan

Summary

This Campus Action Plan was developed through collaborative efforts of our Center for Community Engagement's Democracy Initiatives student and professional staff, as well as our non-partisan democratic engagement student organization leaders. Our 2022 Action Plan, adapted from our 2020 plan, seeks to build on our existing successes in driving substantial student voting participation, by reaching out explicitly to groups on campus that have been typically underserved and marginalized with respect to voting access and support. This plan continues our commitment to education and empowerment in the Middlebury Community during the 2022 general elections, 2023 town elections, 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 2020 presidential elections, Middlebury had a voting rate of 85.7%, an increase by 23.4 pts. from the 2016 presidential elections.

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 Middlebury's long-term engagement in this work has resulted in successful efforts to increase voter participation, we believe that we have the capacity to continue to increase access and participation. We hope to build upon our momentum in 2022 and beyond.

Operating as a student organization, MiddVotes is managed by a group of undergraduates in collaboration with the Middlebury College Center for Community Engagement. MiddVotes leadership is predominantly horizontal, with democratic leadership within the group. MiddVotes 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 and affinity groups, activist organizations, athletic teams, performing arts groups, administrative groups, the

Middlebury College Student Government Organization, faculty, staff, and administration. MiddVotes 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.

[Middlebury Civics in Action](#) (MiddCiA) is a new student organization, developed with the goal of helping students advocate for causes they care about and increasing their involvement in the legislative process. Given their new presence on campus, we are still exploring opportunities for collaboration with MiddCiA. Their organizational goals, however, align with our overall goal to help Middlebury students become more well-rounded participants in civic life in the places most important to them.

Middlebury Athletics was a critical partner in our efforts to increase participation in the 2020 general elections, and we look forward to maintaining that partnership over time.

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 2022, 99% of eligible Middlebury students will be registered to vote in the U.S.
 - Increase student voter turnout. By 2022, **90%** 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.)
 - Reduce demographic disparities in voter turnout. By 2022, 70% of eligible black and Asian students will vote in the general election. Increase outreach to the affinity groups of demographics that are underrepresented in 2020 student voting rates
- **Voter Education & Empowerment**
 - Educate new Addison County, Vermont voters and Monterey County, California voters on local issues and candidates, as well as the impacts they may have on their campus community.
 - 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.
 - Underscore the importance of the midterm elections, and how local changes can have nationwide impacts
- **Development & Expansion of MiddVotes**

- Develop outreach to international students, adapting from [this](#) resource created by Stony Brook’s Center for Civic Justice.
- Reach more spaces, groups, and communities on campus with our election engagement efforts, prioritizing groups with low voter turnout in the 2020 election + with the goal of better understanding any barriers they may face in voting.
- 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
- Update the MiddVotes [website](#) and [Instagram](#) with resources on registering to vote, requesting absentee 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.

Summer 2022

Action Item
Write targeted state-by-state emails to be sent in the fall <i>Ongoing- Done by Sept</i>
Develop a slide deck that faculty can use to inform classes about how to vote <i>Ongoing</i>
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 2022

Action Item

Table at move in day and freshman optional activities

Sept 8-11

Tue, Sept. 20: 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 19-23rd

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

Ongoing

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!

Ongoing

Have students sign pledge to vote cards at events and include their emails so we can send follow up reminders

Sept 19-23rd

Do a first social media takeover of the Middlebury College instagram to advertise National Voter Registration week

Sept 18-24th

Partner with college Dems & Republicans to host a presidential debate watch party

October 2022

Action Item

Provide free stamps in the mail center, residential offices, and library for students to send ballots

Oct 18-Nov 8

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 MiddVotes 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! <i>Mid-Late Oct</i>
Create posters and napkin dispenser cards with info about same-day voting in VT/reminder to vote <i>Late Oct</i>

November 2022

Action Item
First week until election day: do a second social media takeover of the Middlebury College instagram <i>Oct 30-Nov 5</i>
Have the Middlebury Campus (newspaper) run a picture of the VT ballot with instructions on how to fill it out <i>Nov 3</i>
Partner with local businesses/orgs to put out voting reminders starting the Friday (Nov 4) before election day <i>Nov 3-Nov 8</i>
Table outside of dining halls the 2 days before election day to advertise same day voting in VT and info about the Middlebury ballot <i>Nov 6-8</i>

ELECTION DAY – Tue, Nov 8

Action Item
Table outside of dining halls to encourage students to go vote <i>8-2pm 430-7pm</i>
Run a shuttle to the polls leaving ADK every hour <i>7am-7pm</i>
Run a shuttle to polls leaving Samson every hour (MIIS) <i>7am-7pm</i>
Have volunteers make announcements in the beginning of classes <i>Ongoing</i>
Host a #VoteTogether party outside of the polls with food and music <i>5pm-9pm</i>
Host a #VoteTogether party with food and music <i>5pm-9pm</i>
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>

Winter/Spring 2023

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>
Hold one fun MiddVotes social event for volunteers <i>J-term</i>
Table at the activities fair for incoming Febs <i>February 2023</i>

Table at spring Club Fair to recruit volunteers and raise awareness of 2022-23 initiatives (MIIS)
Work with Res life to see if we can table on orientation next fall --academic fair <i>March-April 2023</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 2023</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 2022 Gensler symposium <i>April 2023</i>
Work with Renee Wells to develop training for faculty on how to have inclusive conversations about local and national elections <i>Ongoing</i>
Meet with SGA External Affairs Committee to determine what role they can play institutionally <i>Ongoing</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 MiddVotes 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:

- 2022 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.

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