



Middlesex College Democratic Engagement Action Plan 2024
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Middlesex College Democratic Engagement Action Plan 2024 ALL IN Challenge

I. Executive Summary

This Democratic Engagement Action Plan formalizes both existing and planned initiatives across and throughout Middlesex College, and extends those initiatives with deliberate planful new programming to further engage the college community in civic and democratic activity throughout academic year 2024-2025. Furthermore, the Plan aims to bolster Middlesex College's ongoing recognition as a Voter Friendly Campus through collaboration with the Campus Vote Project and the ALL IN Challenge. It outlines initiatives for the 2024-2025 period designed not only to encourage voter registration and participation but also to cultivate *informed* voters. Our goal is to nurture students who have developed a thorough understanding of every aspect of the voting process, are familiar with the challenges facing their communities, and have rigorously evaluated policies, proposals, and political candidates and are motivated to speak their voice through voting and beyond. Developed by the Director, Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships as informed by meetings, discussion and collaboration with many College constituents, this plan encompasses work that spans the College community and will serve to re-initiate some activities that had to be suspended over recent years.

Our initial Civic Action Plan was constructed in partnership with the campus-wide Civic Engagement Subcommittee; that Committee has been dormant due to extenuating circumstances but now that those circumstances have resolved, the goal is launch the renamed group as *Civic Engagement Roundtable* in Spring 2024. During the hiatus, the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships took the lead in initiating collaborative efforts across and beyond the Middlesex College community but we are poised to reinvigorate our work by expanding the voices at the table. This Plan documents areas of growth as well as formalizes initiatives intended to move the needle on the institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement at this critical time for our democracy and all who reside in our communities.

Middlesex College is a key institution within our community and civic engagement is embedded within our culture and goals. The mission of Middlesex College is to provide access to a quality, affordable education for a diverse population, to support student success for lifelong learning, and to strengthen the economic, social and cultural life of the community.

In accordance with the College's Mission and the supporting strategic goals outlined in the Strategic Plan 2023-2028 (Appendix A), the purpose of this plan is to further student involvement in democratic and civic actions to the betterment of themselves, their families and their communities. Democratic engagement goals established herein by the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships are detailed within Section V. *Goals and Strategy for Student Learning and Institutional Civic Culture*; the departmental goals are situated within and derived from the College's Strategic Plan 2023-2028, specifically:

Goal B. Middlesex College Focused on Students

Middlesex College promotes learning opportunities that broaden the boundaries of higher education and support access.

C. Middlesex College Engaged with Our Community

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Middlesex College connects with employers, organizations, and individuals and establishes partnerships and collaborations that improve learning and services for students throughout the community.

This Action Plan serves to document our planful steps along a continuum of profound impactful activity focused on engaging students and our community in the processes of change. The basis of the Democratic Engagement Action Plan 2024 is derived from the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships' 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 Department Goals which has been approved by the Assistant Dean, Student Engagement.

Our history portrays a longstanding respect for democratic and community civic engagement. Middlesex College created the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships and the position of Director, Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships in April 2019. However, the College's involvement in the voter registration drives started in the Spring 2004 semester with the EOF (New Jersey's Educational Opportunity Fund) Club. That year the efforts of the Club's executive club leaders assisted the College, the Office of Student Life and the student body with the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) mandate. We joined the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) in June 2020 to better inform our planning and decision-making, as well as to document student voter engagement.

Under the leadership of President Mark McCormick, the College established the Community Advisory Group in 2021; college administration meets with the Community Advisory Group quarterly. Members of the Group represent non-profits, companies, local government officials and local school representatives.

The Director, Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships will initiate the convening of our Civic Engagement Roundtable with a call to gather all stakeholders to engage in executing and assessing the outcomes of the AY 2024 chapter of this Plan and extending our actions inward, outward and forward.

II. *Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Leadership*

Civic Engagement Roundtable

Middlesex College created the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships (CECP) and the position of Director, Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships in April 2019. Earlier that academic year in November 2018, the Civic Engagement Subcommittee was founded and chaired by two faculty members with the stated objective of connecting individuals on campus doing civically-engaged work in order to share ideas, successes, contacts and "spurring collaborative activities that support civic and community engagement and student learning". In Fall 2019, the Director of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships joined the faculty members in co-chairing the Civic Engagement Subcommittee.

The original founding members of the Subcommittee spanned the college:

- Vice President, Academic Affairs
- Faculty, History and Social Science
- Faculty, English
- Assistant Dean, Student Engagement
- Director, Student Life
- Director, Library

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Director, New Brunswick Center
Director, Perth Amboy Center
Director, Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships
Coordinator, Experiential Learning & Civic Engagement
Coordinator, Student Life
Coordinator, Democracy House Center for Civic Leadership and Community Service
Coordinator, Coordinator of Military and Veterans Services
Student Representatives

To begin the launch of the new Roundtable, the Director CECP has begun conducting individual meetings with key members of the College community to elicit feedback as well as – hopefully – commitment and support of the new version. Student voice is always a driving one that guides our work yet students were missing from the original Subcommittee. Once the Civic Engagement Roundtable convenes, student representation will be solidified as will a plan to include key community partners into the planning, perhaps as an advisory board. Feedback on our previous Action Plan recommended including a local election official onto the Roundtable and the Landscape section will discuss an initiative that did just that.

To provide insight into our incoming students' interest and commitment, we are planning to implement Stanford University's Hass Center for Public Service' *Pathways to Public Service and Civic Engagement* survey to assess both our understanding of and student "interests and pre-dispositions regarding approaches to social change: community engaged learning and research, community organizing and activism, direct service, philanthropy, policy and governance, and social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility." (https://stanforduniversity.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_54JKgvWCODwK4x8) Originally planned for Fall 2020, the timing of the survey's administration is tentatively scheduled for Fall 2024. Survey results will be utilized to more specifically target areas that students believe are critical and in need of support, and will drive our planning for the subsequent semesters.

Note that the Civic Engagement Roundtable and its predecessor were charged with broad civically-engaged activities of which democratic engagement and voting are/were components. Once the Roundtable convenes, planned discussion about how to organize ourselves will be the first order of business. The goal, an ambitious one, is to assemble a team that is at once nimble, informed and action-oriented while incorporating the many aspects of civic engagement at Middlesex College.

The Director for Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships will act as the initial chairperson for the Civic Engagement Roundtable, charged with ensuring the group's convening. The Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships spearheads the College's democratic engagement programs and is the driving force for ensuring the college remains Voter Friendly. That said, the work is being done across the College – as *institutionalization* implies – and part of our challenge/goal is to ensure we capture the efforts and their results as part of the democratic fabric of Middlesex College.

Community Advisory Committee

Under the leadership of President Mark McCormick, the College established the Community Advisory Committee in 2021; college administration meets with the Community Advisory Committee quarterly. Members

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of the Committee represent non-profits, local companies, local elected officials and local school representatives throughout the community. The members share initiatives, requests for support/collaboration and raise community priorities during the meetings. The Director, Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships had the opportunity to present to the Committee in February 2024 about the engagement efforts of the College, which resulted in several new connections for programs like Community-Engaged Learning classes, Democracy House Bonner Leader community partner sites and other opportunities for community engagement and service for all students.

Succession Planning

In the event that there is a change in leadership in CECP or reorganization at the College that vacates the position or substantively modifies it, the Assistant Dean for Student Engagement will be responsible for establishing a new mechanism and structure that ensures continuity and commitment to the ongoing institutionalization of civic engagement at Middlesex College.

III. Evidence of Commitment

Beginning with the College's Mission and Goals Statements (Appendix A) as prepared by the College community and approved by the Board of Trustees, the theme of engaging our students with the community through a variety of programming and opportunities, including civic and democratically purposeful ones, permeates Middlesex College's aim. In addition to being woven into the fabric of the Mission and its supporting Strategic Initiatives, Middlesex College's administration founded the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships to aggregate, document, motivate and guide civically-engaged efforts already in existence in many areas of the College as well as to spearhead new initiatives. As evidence of both the existence of significant work already underway and of the value of a central focal point for civic engagement, Middlesex College has been a NASPA LEAD Initiative Institution for since October 2019. In addition, President Mark McCormick is a signature of the ALL In Presidential Commitment.

Democracy House (DH), Middlesex College Center for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership, was founded in 1995 and has been functioning ever since. In 2010, 2011 and 2013 it was named to President Obama's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. After residing in an academic department for several years, Democracy House was moved to report to Career Services within Student Affairs (Career Services became Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships in April 2019). Democracy House students commit to a minimum of 300 hours of community service each academic year at their assigned community partner site. Our DH program is affiliated with Bonner Foundation, one of only two 2-year schools in the country with a Bonner Leader program. In addition to the service commitment, DH Bonner Leaders meet weekly as a cohort with the coordinator for leadership development, guest speakers and other programming. For those students who cannot make the commitment to DH in terms of service hours, the Volunteers in Action Club (founded two years ago) provides students the opportunity to participate in events and service projects to the extent that their family, work and academic obligations allow.

In Summer 2019, Middlesex College became a member of Campus Compact and the New Jersey Campus Compact chapter (NJCC). In 2021, EngageNJ split from national Campus Compact and Middlesex College was a founding member. In November 2021, the Director, Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships was named

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to the EngageNJ's Strategic Planning Committee as well as to the Civic Leadership Committee charged with defining EngageNJ and positioning it as an important resource for higher education in the State https://www.engagenj.org/_files/ugd/4a507c_66251a5422a9469c90027d977ff26f90.pdf

Middlesex College hosted the EngageNJ Annual THRIVE Student Conference in 2022, 2023 and 2024. We are also hosting EngageNJ's first Faculty Symposium in April entitled *Rooted in Purpose, Branching Out in Action: Empowering Communities Through Civic Engagement Towards a More Sustainable Future*; Director CECP serves on the Symposium planning committee. Participation in national Campus Compact and now EngageNJ affords access to a substantial amount of research and resources as well as collaboration with member colleges across New Jersey. The College's investment of funds as well as personnel and campus resources to EngageNJ evidences the level of commitment to the mission of EngageNJ.

In June 2020, we procured TurboVote from DemocracyWorks as a tool for facilitating student voter registration, logistical voting data and candidate/referendum information.

In June 2022, we procured GivePulse "... a community of volunteers, professionals, civic leaders and service-learning students. GivePulse enables you to capture your impact in the community." <https://www.givepulse.com/> In Summer 2023 we renamed our instance of GivePulse to **CommunityConnect** to better communicate with the College community and wider community about the function of the product. Starting in the Fall 2022 semester, we used CommunityConnect to record Democracy House Bonner Leader community service hours as well as to manage projects/impacts in CEL (Community Engaged Learning, formerly service learning) courses. Several clubs/student organizations now have subgroups within CommunityConnect to record and track service initiatives, and we've added several community partners as affiliates. In addition to providing key data about impacts and engagements, GivePulse will provide students with an engagement "transcript" that officially records their impacts and activities.

In Fall 2023, I nominated one of our students for the GivePulse Student Ambassador Program and once accepted, she was trained by GivePulse on the functions of the product. Come Spring 2024, she will be working to support the Bonner Program as well as CEL courses in using CommunityConnect.

Moving forward into academic year 2024-2025, the College is currently evaluating an application for the 2026 Cycle of the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement. We have been in contact with staff at the American Council on Education to verify application cost and the College's eligibility to apply. In March, the Director CECP also attended a Campus Compact workshop entitled *Democracy Audit Design Team* as an introduction to conducting a comprehensive all-encompassing assessment of civic engagement at Middlesex College in anticipation of the application process.

IV. Current Campus Landscape

Middlesex College's main location is in Edison, New Jersey with two urban centers, one in New Brunswick and one in Perth Amboy. Based on the percentage of Hispanic Latino students enrolled, we are a designated Hispanic-serving Institution (HSI). According to Middlesex College's Fall 2021 Fact Book, total enrollment was 9,483 comprised of 3,894 fulltime and 5,589 part-time students, the average age of students is 22.5 years.

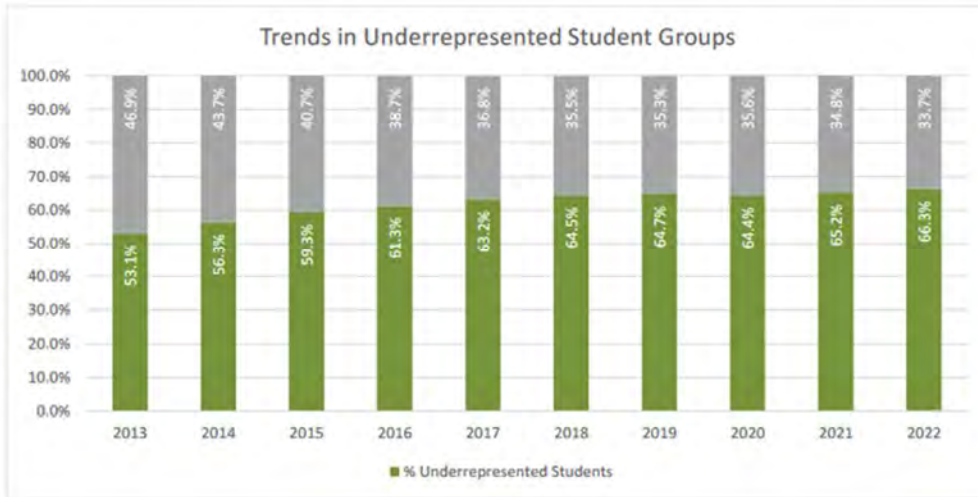
<https://mymcc.middlesexcc.edu/institutionalresearch/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/02/fall-factbook-2021.pdf>

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Fall Semester Headcount by Race and Ethnicity
Past Ten Years

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
International	263	283	274	246	222	226	288	268	303	354
American Indian	37	37	45	42	42	34	38	32	30	27
Asian	1,440	1,513	1,634	1,733	1,747	1,692	1,741	1,639	1,526	1,786
Black	1,380	1,365	1,314	1,308	1,358	1,314	1,303	1,178	1,146	1,080
Native Hawaiian	141	94	57	36	33	22	32	32	24	26
White	4,164	3,847	3,615	3,333	3,277	3,017	3,031	2,723	2,448	2,302
Hispanic	3,394	3,461	3,548	3,544	3,739	3,696	3,756	3,268	3,142	3,233
2 or More	303	327	319	315	288	274	349	346	315	311
Unknown	1,489	1,137	867	823	691	628	613	599	549	625
Underrepresented Students Total	6,695	6,797	6,917	6,978	7,207	7,032	7,219	6,495	6,183	6,463
Total Headcount	12,611	12,064	11,673	11,380	11,397	10,903	11,151	10,085	9,483	9,744
% Underrepresented Students	53.1%	56.3%	59.3%	61.3%	63.2%	64.5%	64.7%	64.4%	65.2%	66.3%

Underrepresented Students include: American Indian, Asian, Black, Native Hawaiian, Hispanic and 2 or more



We also continue to see online options (Online, Hybrid and Remote Live) as the choice of significant numbers of students post-pandemic which plays into the need for changing methods for engaging them:

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Total Headcount for Fall Semester by Location
Past Ten Years

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Edison	11,683	11,189	10,758	10,433	10,436	9,897	9,975	265	3,279	6,084
% Change	-2.3%	-4.2%	-3.9%	-3.0%	0.0%	-5.2%	0.8%	-97.3%	1137.4%	85.5%
New Brunswick	725	797	787	776	829	676	713	0	96	261
% Change	-2.8%	9.9%	-1.3%	-1.4%	6.8%	-18.5%	5.5%	-100.0%		171.9%
Perth Amboy	988	993	927	811	859	781	751	0	411	524
% Change	-4.6%	0.5%	-6.6%	-12.5%	5.9%	-9.1%	-3.8%	-100.0%		27.5%
High School*	78	0	0	27	10	64	194	423	650	1,147
% Change	-15.2%	-100.0%			-63.0%	540.0%	203.1%	118.0%	53.7%	76.5%
Online	987	1216	1400	1518	1817	1970	2,259	6,264	4,682	3,811
% Change	11.7%	23.2%	15.1%	8.4%	19.7%	8.4%	14.7%	177.3%	-25.3%	-18.6%
Hybrid					80	39	43	260	2,824	1,056
% Change						-51.3%	10.3%	504.7%	986.2%	-62.6%
Remote Live								8,069	5,549	2,180
% Change									-31.2%	-60.7%
Duplicated Total*	14,461	14,195	13,872	13,565	14,031	13,427	13,935	15,281	17,491	15,063
% Change	-1.7%	-1.8%	-2.3%	-2.2%	3.4%	-4.3%	-0.7%	13.8%	25.5%	-1.4%
Unduplicated Total	12,611	12,064	11,673	11,380	11,397	10,903	11,151	10,085	9,483	9,744
% Change	-2.3%	-4.3%	-3.2%	-2.5%	0.1%	-4.3%	2.3%	-9.6%	-6.0%	2.8%

(Edison is our campus; Perth Amboy and New Brunswick are urban centers)

Voting and Voter Engagement

Our programming for Fall 2023 was entitled *Vote From the Bottom Up* reflecting that the November 2023 elections in New Jersey involved elections for all state senate and state assembly office, and no national or gubernatorial race. Not only did our messaging promote the fact that local elections are very impactful on life in and issues surrounding our localities but we strove to generate excitement ourselves during an election cycle when media was less focused on local NJ elections. Our performance in the BJ Ballot Bowl measured some success but NSLVE data will tell the tale once available.

Our student newspaper *Quo Vadis* ran articles about voting and issues of concern, including a front page feature story about **New Jersey Ballot Bowl 2023** run by the Office of the Secretary of State of New Jersey, and our participation in that event https://www.quovadisnewspaper.com/edition/page-001/page_40f84370-41ef-5e45-b7d0-e0a9b7ba48ba.html

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Middlesex College Prepwork Fall Photographs Collection Eduardo Calderon, Jacquelyn Balle	Women's Assembly Inspires Students Estajay Calderon, Jacquelyn Balle	Middlesex Legislators Game of the Season By Ryan Cardenas, Co-Editor
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QUOVADIS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2023 WEEKLY STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF MIDDLESEX COLLEGE VOLUME 50 ISSUE 3

Ballot Bowl, Set And Let the Gains Begin!

Civic Engagement at Heart of Middlesex College Quest for Victory

By Zakyla Forbes, Co-Editor

Middlesex College's Democratic Engagement and Community Participation Plan is a commitment to the future of the college and the community. It is a plan that is designed to ensure that every student has the opportunity to participate in the college's democratic process. The plan is a reflection of the college's commitment to civic engagement and community participation. It is a plan that is designed to ensure that every student has the opportunity to participate in the college's democratic process. The plan is a reflection of the college's commitment to civic engagement and community participation.

The Civic Engagement and Community Participation Plan is a commitment to the future of the college and the community. It is a plan that is designed to ensure that every student has the opportunity to participate in the college's democratic process. The plan is a reflection of the college's commitment to civic engagement and community participation. It is a plan that is designed to ensure that every student has the opportunity to participate in the college's democratic process. The plan is a reflection of the college's commitment to civic engagement and community participation.

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Quality education is a student's right and the college's responsibility. It is a responsibility that is shared by the college and the community. The college is committed to providing a quality education for every student. It is a commitment that is reflected in the college's Democratic Engagement and Community Participation Plan. The plan is a reflection of the college's commitment to civic engagement and community participation. It is a plan that is designed to ensure that every student has the opportunity to participate in the college's democratic process. The plan is a reflection of the college's commitment to civic engagement and community participation.

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It would be misleading to portray Middlesex College's democratic engagement efforts as the sole property of CECP. Instead, we seek to collect and document initiatives across the College in order to provide a more comprehensive assessment of civic engagement. For example

- Faculty in History and Social Sciences Department are holding Primary Elections: Promise or Peril panel discussion examining the democratic merits of the political primary election system as an institution in American politics.



Primary Elections: Promise or Peril?

This panel will be examining the democratic merits of the political primary election system as an institution in American politics.

Topics to be covered:

- The history of primaries as a tool for democratic participation in the electoral process.
- The weakening of the political parties through the primary system.
- What is the most fundamental avenue for change in the political system, primaries, parties, or pluralist coalitions of non-partisan activism.

Panelists:

Associate Professor of Political Science, Nicholas Archer, PhD
Associate Professor of History, Cristobal Espinoza-Wulach, PhD

**Monday,
April 15, 2024
11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**

**Raritan Bay Room,
Crabiel Hall**

*Brought to you by
Middlesex College's History and
Social Sciences Department.*

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- Middlesex College Library staff created a series of LibGuides published for access by all members of the College community

Elections

Search this Guide:

Search

Home

Federal Elections

State and Local Elections

How to Vote

Voting Rights

Media Literacy and Evaluating Information

History of Voting and Elections

More Resources

Get Help from a Librarian

About This LibGuide

This elections guide was created for the 2024 elections including presidential, state, and Middlesex County elections. It includes how and where to vote, voting rights, and the history of voting. This guide provides resources to assist in making decisions regarding voting, including things to think about while evaluating election coverage.

Special thanks to Indiana University's Mind Over Chatter course.

Canada, M., P. Cook, P. Boruff-Jones, and C. Downey. (2019). *Mind over chatter: Skills for navigating the post-truth era*. Teacher edition. Indiana University Instructure. <https://expand-iu-edu.beta.catalog.instructure.com/browse/moc/courses/mind-over-chatter>.

Turbo-Vote



TurboVote

Middlesex College has licensed TurboVote from DemocracyNow! to make it easy for you to:

- Register to vote
- Check your registration
- Request absentee/mail-in ballots
- Get voting reminders and notifications specific to NJ, Middlesex County and your own local districts

Information you enter in TurboVote will not be sold or shared.

[Sign up for TurboVote now!](#)

- Middlesex College is a Civic Center within the Citizen's Campaign National Citizen Leadership Service. Among the initiatives are
 - Free community access to the Citizen's Campaign online course *The Power of Civics: Leadership and No Blame Problem Solving* <https://middlesexcollege.edu/lifelong-learning/non-credit-and-enrichment-courses/>
 - Multiple academic Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) courses in the History and Social Sciences Department have incorporate some or all of The Power of Civics as the community engagement component of the course.

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Middlesex College finished in 2nd place in our division of the 2023 NJ Ballot Bowl.

- The League of Women Voters partnered with us, staffing a table several days in October to register students to vote.
- Community members Omega Mu Zeta Alumni Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority came to campus to register voters on the last day of New Jersey Voter Registration
- Democracy House Bonner Leaders held a voter registration day in the lobby of the Middlesex College Library on the last day of voter registration in New Jersey:



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Community Organizing for Civic Engagement

In Spring 2023, we collaborated with Eric Kipnis, Manager of Constituent Relations in NJ Secretary of State Tahesha Way's office to provide a workshop for students on community organizing and its power for engaging the community and organizing around a cause. A longtime grassroots community organizer, Eric provided Part 1 (Intro to Community Organizing) of the workshop virtually in the spring semester followed by Part 2 (Action Planning) in person on campus in the Fall. In Part 2, student teams created action plans for engaging fellow students and community members in pledging to vote and then voting which they implemented during late September and October 2023.

Community-Engaged Learning

links classroom study to real-world problems. Middlesex College students taking Community-Engaged Learning courses are required to complete a designated class-wide project which requires volunteer service hours with a designated local, not-for-profit community partner. In Fall 2017, three (3) courses offered an optional opportunity for service learning at a partner site selected individually by each student from a list of approved partners. By Fall 2019, that number grew to thirteen (13) courses and the SL is more likely to be a mandatory component of the course with a specific partner/project connected to the course outcomes. In Fall 2021, service learning courses were designated with the “-SL” section code to allow students to locate courses with SL included; we have discovered that students who experience SL express the desire to continue their community involvement through continued enrollment in academic coursework featuring this form of integrated service.

For Fall 2023, community-engaged learning designation replaced service learning; courses were designated with the “-CEL” section code and a catalog search function for “Community-Engaged Learning” was added to the Search for Classes screen to allow students to more easily locate courses:

- English Composition I (4 sections)
- English Composition II (3 sections)
- United States History II
- Statistics II
- Basic Statistics for Business
- U.S. State and Local Govt
- Social Psychology
- Intro to Geology
- Introduction to Meteorology
- Climate Science
- Contemporary Social Problems (2 sections)
- Diversity & Multiculturalism

Spring 2024 & Fall 2024:

Due to staff changes - primarily ‘losing’ our Civic Engagement and Experiential Learning Coordinator to a tenure-track faculty position – as well as other emergency situations, work preparing for Fall 2024 CEL courses was temporarily suspended. Our new Coordinator will start the position January 2, 2024 and will hit the ground running to work in collaboration with the faculty liaison to recruit faculty, brainstorm projects and secure

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community partners by mid-March when registration for 24/FA opens. Assessment of course outcomes was also impacted by these staffing issues, but will be a focus activity starting Fall 2024.

V. Goals and Strategy for Student Learning and Institutional Civic Culture

Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships

“... working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.” (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi)

Mission

The Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships promotes a lifelong commitment to active citizenship and social responsibility among all students and members of the Middlesex College community in order to enhance students’ own academic experiences and career clarity while contributing to stronger communities and an ever more engaged College. The Department enacts programs and initiatives intentionally designed to engage students, staff, faculty and the Middlesex County community. Our mission is to:

- cultivate community-aware and civically-engaged students through volunteerism, service and experiential learning
- develop co-curricular service projects
- encourage civic leadership and community connections
- foster social responsibility and nurture a campus-wide civic ethos that is infused through academics and student affairs in order to promote understanding of our responsibility to our greater community
- promote students’ personal, leadership and career growth including workplace skills and competencies
- collaborate across the College and local community to forge effective and mutually beneficial relationships.

2023-2024 Democratic Engagement Departmental Goals

Included within the departmental goals of the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships are the following specific to democratic engagement:

Long Term Goal 3: Foster social responsibility and nurture a campus-wide civic ethos that is infused through academics and student affairs in order to promote understanding of our responsibility to our greater community. (Middlesex College Strategic Initiatives B1, C1)

1. Survey the College community in Fall 2024 to evaluate current civic engagement initiatives and activities.
 - a. Measurable: Gather feedback from a minimum of 100 participants through the survey.
 - b. Achievable: Develop a comprehensive survey questionnaire and distribute it through various channels to reach a wide representation of the College community.
 - c. Relevant: Assessing existing civic engagement activities aligns with the College's commitment to fostering community involvement and social responsibility.

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- d. Time-bound: Conduct the survey within the Fall 2024 semester to ensure timely data collection and analysis.
2. In accordance with Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE) Election Imperative #3 Develop Informed Voters <https://tufts.app.box.com/v/idhe-election-imperatives-v2> , we will improve students' understanding of the election process by focusing on the significance of primaries and providing educational resources on local issues and concerns.
 - a. Measurable: Develop educational materials, including online guides and workshops, designed to reach at least 25% of our students by the end of the academic year.
 - b. Achievable: Collaborate with relevant campus organizations, faculty, and local government officials to create engaging and accessible resources on primary elections and local issues. Advertise TurboVote as a resource to students.
 - c. Relevant: Increasing students' knowledge of the election process and local concerns fosters civic engagement and empowers them to make informed decisions as active citizens.
 - d. Time-bound: Launch the educational campaign and distribute resources by the start of the Spring semester, ensuring students have ample time to engage with the materials before the New Jersey primary elections in June.
 3. Expand the implementation of CommunityConnect (GivePulse) during the summer of 2024 to capture and track student engagement activities, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of their involvement once the Fall semester begins. Recruit additional community partners and assist them in the process of posting their service needs for our students.
 - a. Measurable: By May 2025, demonstrate that we have increased the usage of CommunityConnect (GivePulse) by 50% compared to the previous academic year, with at least 75% of student engagement activities being logged through the platform.
 - b. Achievable: Provide training sessions and resources to students, staff, and faculty to familiarize them with the CommunityConnect (GivePulse) platform, ensuring widespread adoption and ease-of-use.
 - c. Relevant: Utilizing CommunityConnect (GivePulse) aligns with the College's goal of accurately measuring and understanding student involvement data in community engagement activities, enabling informed decision-making and resource allocation.
 - d. Time-bound: Initiate the training process in the Fall semester across all constituents (student organizations, individual students, faculty and staff, community partners).
 - e. Activate usage of CommunityConnect into CEL courses' Canvas shell to facilitate both instructor ability to monitor project participation as well as to record student impacts as data for the College and as an engagement transcript for the individual student.

Anecdotally, we have observed students' unfamiliarity with the election process, particularly the critical role of primaries. Starting in Spring 2024, our plan is to demystify the process and explore how the cycle builds upon itself at each step.

We have initiated a collaboration with the Office of Student Life with two initial objectives:

1. Expand the usage of CommunityConnect to facilitate and track each student organizations' community service requirement

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2. Create an expansive Martin Luther King Day of Service for 2025 at Middlesex College. Traditionally, Democracy House Bonner Leaders have served the community in many different initiatives over the years but the goal is to increase participation and invite all students to serve the community as part of this national day of service. In order to do so, we need to increase the service opportunities available to student by a substantial amount by November 2024 to allow for registration, any required background checks etc prior to January 20, 2025.

2023-2024 Conceptual Planning

The upcoming Presidential Election in November 2024 will generate voter interest, yet it also raises questions and concerns. We have a significant responsibility to educate students about information literacy, empowering them to be discerning information consumers. To this end, we've shared information within the College community about a valuable resource developed by Indiana University called "Mind Over Chatter." This self-paced module is accessible for free. I initially learned about it during a Campus Compact session and integrated it as an assignment for three semesters in a student success course I taught. Student feedback was very positive feedback.

"Mind Over Chatter" focuses on information literacy, specifically honing the skill of distinguishing fact from opinion and knowledge from hype (or worse). Indiana University has generously made this resource available for public access on their website: <https://expand.iu.edu/browse/moc/courses/mind-over-chatter>. Additionally, it is accessible in Canvas Commons for easy import into any Canvas courses.

Our initial planning to date includes but will not be limited to

- Inviting candidates virtually or in-person to speak to students including a 2022 graduate of Middlesex College who ran for and won a seat on his local Board of Education
- Exploring issues of importance to students and providing non-partisan information about those issues in the platforms of candidates
- Q&A Info Sessions where students can ask questions of guest speakers
- Schedule a TurboVote rollout to new students through New Student Orientation and our annual QuestionMart (tabling in every classroom building for the first week of the Fall semester)
- Ask student clubs and organizations to fulfill their service obligation by coordinating with us on specific voting and voter registration service initiatives and document that service in CommunityConnect.
- Continued collaboration with Rutgers-New Brunswick Eagleton Institute for Youth Political Participation.

We will continue to utilize TurboVote for voter registration, voter registration status queries and updates, dates & reminders and candidate information. In addition, we will work with Student Government Association (SGA), our College Library, our student newspaper, Quo Vadis, and our two Centers (New Brunswick and Perth Amboy) to reach students.

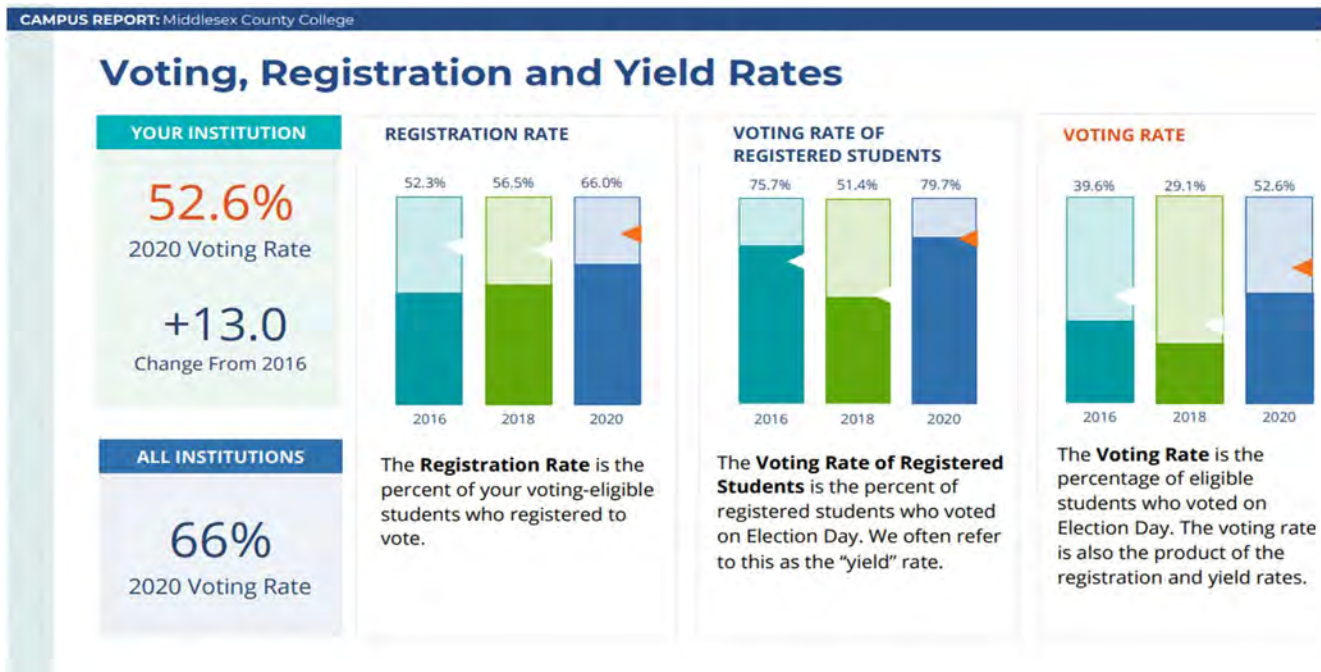
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VI. NSLVE

Our 2020 NSLVE Report demonstrated a 13% increase in student voting rates from 2016 to 2020 and while this timeframe includes several key initiatives on the part of Middlesex College -including the creation of the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships as well as the Director role - this result does not prove causation. In this same timeframe, college students have become increasingly aware of and involved in issues relating to climate change and personal freedoms e.g. abortion rights. As clearly demonstrated in our results, mail-in and early voting options publicized during the pandemic proved popular with voters. In New Jersey, citizens can register to vote at age 17 although they cannot cast a vote until they turn 18. On January 4, 2024 NJ Governor Phil Murphy enacted the *New Voter Empowerment Act* which allows 17-year-olds to participate in primary elections, provided they reach the age of 18 by the following general election.

<https://morristownminute.town.news/g/morristown-nj/n/232554/new-jersey-breaks-ground-youth-voting-reform-17-year-olds-gain-primary>



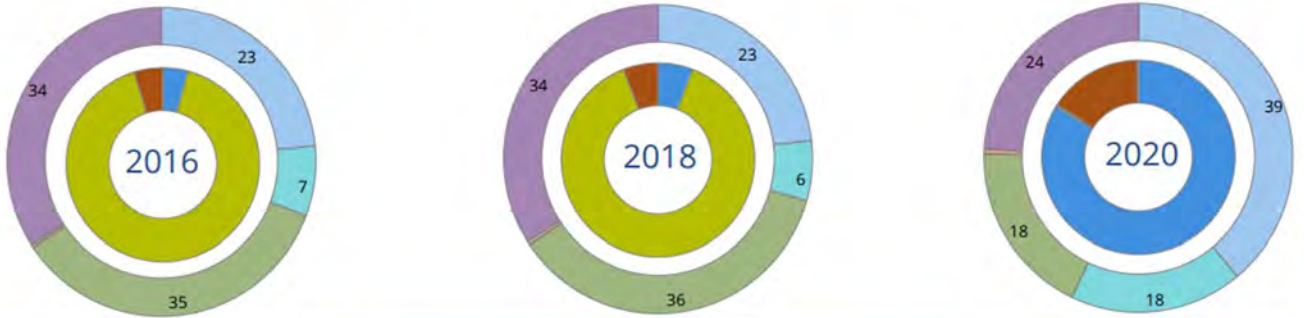
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CAMPUS REPORT: Middlesex County College

By Voting Method

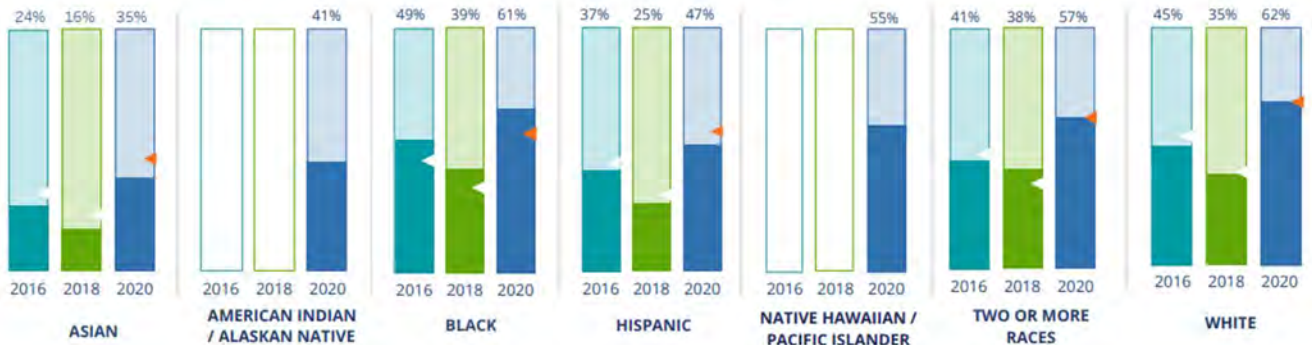
Not-In-Person Early Vote In-Person Other Provisional Unknown



	Voted	2016 Rate	Voted	2018 Rate	Voted	2020 Rate	2016-2020 Change (p.p.)
Early Vote	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
In-Person on Election Day	3,716	91	2,560	88	-	-	-
Not-In-Person	170	4	169	6	3,861	84	80 ↑
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Provisional	197	5	168	6	725	16	11 ↑
Voting Method Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

CAMPUS REPORT: Middlesex County College

By Race / Ethnicity



As an officially recognized Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), the College's initiatives are intentionally designed to be inclusive, thoughtful, and provide opportunities for all. Although DACA students can and do obtain financial aid through NJ Dreamers program, they are unable to register to vote and cannot vote.

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VI. Strategy

In March 2024, an AmeriCorps VISTA graduate student was moved to CECP and they have been assigned to create a plan of outreach, initiatives and activities driven by the student group data reported in NSLVE. I have just submitted an application to renew/replace the AmeriCorps VISTA graduate student for 2024-2025. In addition, we have been approved to hire a Federal Work Study (FWS) student worker under the new guidelines allowing usage for voter and civic engagement.

The preliminary plan of outreach to student groups identified in the NSLVE report outlines a series of activities to begin immediately:

- Student focus groups to discuss democratic engagement (beliefs, concerns, issues to address, community impacts) followed by a second set of focus groups to receive feedback after the initiatives to inform future events and to course-correct.
- Outreach to student athletes and coaches. Middlesex College Athletics has been an active supporter of civic engagement activities, and our goal is to build upon the foundation that has been created.
- Creation of student organizations focused on civic and democratic engagement, e.g. Circle K International (CKI)
- Targeted outreach to the College's two urban centers in the City of New Brunswick (38.8 % Hispanic [https://datausa.io/profile/geo/new-brunswick-nj/#:~:text=The%205%20largest%20ethnic%20groups,%2DHispanic\)%20\(10%25\).](https://datausa.io/profile/geo/new-brunswick-nj/#:~:text=The%205%20largest%20ethnic%20groups,%2DHispanic)%20(10%25).) and City of Perth Amboy (77.7% Hispanic <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/perth-amboy-nj/#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20Perth%20Amboy%2C%20NJ,%2C%20a%20%E2%88%920.808%25%20decrease.>) to ensure programming, marketing, initiatives and more are reflective of our student population and our HSI designation.
- Collaborate with campus organizations and faculty on a series of movie screenings including Movie/Documentary screening: “Your Vote is Your Voice”, “Whose Vote Counts, Explained”, “Safeguard: An Electoral College Story”
- Utilizing social media to publicize voting resources including language-specific helplines
 - Election Protection Toll-Free Helplines for issues at the polls: 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683), English only, led by the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law;
 - 888-VE-Y-VOTA (888-839-8682), Spanish and English, led by the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Education Fund;
 - 888-API-VOTE (888-274-8683), in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali, led by APIAVote and Asian Americans Advancing Justice;
 - 844-418-1682 (#YallaVote), Arabic and English, led by the Arab American Institute.

VIII. Reporting: *Sharing Accomplishments and Action*

In Fall 2024, a survey of the College community’s existing civic engagement activities will be distributed to faculty, staff, and adjunct faculty members through the College’s Department of Institutional Research. Armed with the results, the Director of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships, Institutional Research and the Civic Engagement Roundtable will determine how to make information out of the collected data via a to-be-identified vehicle that enables all interested parties to access and update contacts, accomplishments, partners, initiatives and more. In addition, the information will be added to the College’s assessment tool, TaskStream for

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reporting and broad accessibility. The goal of the information repository is to guide new initiatives, provide ready access to civic engagement data to the College administration, and identify gaps in our offerings where additional focus is required.

We also need information from our students. To that end, we intend to evaluate Stanford University’s Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement tool in Fall 2024 as a vehicle to gauge interest areas and motivation of our students in order to further ensure that our initiatives and their interests align, and that we incorporate their interests in our ongoing planning.

As stated previously, in Fall 2023, we participated in the New Jersey Secretary of State’s Ballot Bowl 2023 voter registration initiative as we did since 2018.

Also as mentioned previously, the Director, CECP presented to the President’s Community Advisory Committee in February 2024 about the engagement efforts of the College in general and the work of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships in particular. The discussion during and after the meeting resulted in several new connections for programs like Community-Engaged Learning classes, Democracy House Bonner Leader community partner sites and other opportunities for community engagement and service for all students. See Attachment D for a list of the community organizations represented on the Advisory Committee.

IX. Evaluation of Impact and Progress

In addition to assessment metrics utilized internally to assess program efficacy, there are several national standards that are applicable. As part of our continued work, we intend to borrow and/or model additional assessments on these highly relevant standards in order to demonstrate to stakeholders that this Democratic Engagement Action Plan and Civic Engagement and the Community Partnerships’ Strategic Plan is making progress and reaching established goals. Bandy et al (2018) discuss assessment as (the) “transformative process that involves all stakeholders in values-engaged exploration of the processes, relationships, and results of their collaborative work to reshape and renew public life”

(Bandy, J., Price, M. F., Clayton, P. H., Metzker, J., Nigro, G., Stanlick, S., Etheridge Woodson, S., Bartel, A., & Gale, S. (2018). Democratically engaged assessment: Reimagining the purposes and practices of assessment in community engagement. Davis, CA: Imagining America.)

As stated previously, we intend to evaluate Stanford University’s **Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement** tool in Fall 2024 and will augment the results of our analysis with additional metrics to ensure we understand progress or lack thereof as well as impact and gaps for future programming. The survey data will be expanded by a series of focus groups with student to hear their stories to create a more robust picture of civic and democratic engagement from the student perspective. The cycle of assessment will be ongoing.

Middlesex College has had a rigorous assessment process utilizing TaskStream to document outcomes. Our Institutional Research team have just announced we will be transitioning to a new assessment tool in the near future. In 2023-2024, we will assess the impact and outcomes of the *Vote From the Bottom Up* initiative through survey(s) and focus groups

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Appendix A: Middlesex College Vision and Mission



College Mission: The mission of Middlesex College is to provide access to a quality, affordable education for a diverse population, to support student success for lifelong learning, and to strengthen the economic, social and cultural life of the community.

Strategic Plan – 2023-2028

A. Gateway to Success

Middlesex College guides students through their transition to college, supports them in selecting and completing a pathway to achieve their goals, and prepares them for post-Middlesex success.

1. Enhance Supports for Students to Transition, Acclimate and Thrive at Middlesex College.
2. Upgrade Technology on Campus to Support Skill Development for Credit and Continuing Education Career Programs.
3. Employ Initiatives Focused on Reduction of Equity Gaps and Barriers to Academic and Personal Success.
4. Ensure That Students Understand Scope and Value of Available Educational Offerings at Middlesex College.

B. Focused on Students

Middlesex College promotes learning opportunities that broaden the boundaries of higher education and support access.

1. Champion and Support Initiatives that Promote Access, Affordability, Engagement and Completion.
2. Create a Wellness Center Consistent with Best Practices in the Higher Education Sector.
3. Reconfigure Campus Spaces in Ways That Promote Student Engagement and Support.
4. Develop Collaborations and Partnerships to Expand Course Offerings, Internships and Engaged Learning Opportunities.
5. Increase Flexibility for the Students of Today and Tomorrow.

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C. Engaged with Our Community

Middlesex College connects with employers, organizations, and individuals and establishes partnerships and collaborations that improve learning and services for students throughout the community.

1. Collaborate with Middlesex County and the Middlesex County Magnet Schools in Achieving Shared Goals.
2. Create New Events to Bring Community Members to the Edison Campus.
3. Establish Shared Services Arrangements To Leverage Resources and Benefit Our Communities.
4. Identify and respond to evolving business, industry, and cultural trends and community needs.

D. Pride in Our Welcoming Environment

Middlesex College offers a spacious campus and two well-equipped centers with facilities and technologies that support teaching, learning, and student success.

1. Support Growth of Offerings and Available Services at the New Brunswick and Perth Amboy Centers.
2. Maximize Use of Campus Technology Through Professional Development and Technical Support to Enhance Student and Community Experiences.
3. Modify College Processes To Encourage Efficiencies That Allow More Available Resources (Including Time) for Supporting Students and Employees.
4. Conduct Compliance Audits and Implement Recommendations to Enhance Accessibility for All College Spaces and Services.

E. Equitable and Inclusive Excellence

Middlesex College promotes a safe and welcoming environment that fosters students' and employees' sense of belonging, and values diversity, inclusion, and equity in teaching, learning, services, research, and professional development.

1. Assess Recruitment/Interview/Hiring Processes to Expand Applicant Pools and Support Diversity in Hiring.
2. Expand Professional Development Opportunities in Areas That Promote Equity and Inclusion.
3. Evaluate College Governance Structures To Ensure Voices Are Heard.
4. Employ Initiatives That Support Employees and Students Facing Challenges Stemming from Their Lived Experiences.

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Appendix B: New Jersey Ballot Bowl 2023

The *Ballot Bowl Community Engage* category shown last below tallied Pledges to Vote elicited by our students from members of the community-at-large.

2023 Ballot Bowl Winners

2023 Ballot Bowl Winners


Conference 1:
 1st Place: Rutgers University-Newark
 2nd Place: Kean University
 3rd Place: Montclair State University

Conference 2:
 1st Place: The College of New Jersey
 2nd Place: Middlesex College
 3rd Place: William Paterson University

Conference 3:
 1st Place: Rutgers University-Camden
 2nd Place: Mercer County Community College
 3rd Place: Ramapo College of New Jersey

Conference 4:
 1st Place: Centenary University
 2nd Place: Saint Peter's University
 3rd Place: Berkeley College

Ballot Bowl Community Engage:
 1st Place: Rutgers University-Newark
 2nd Place: Montclair State University
 3rd Place: (tie) Kean University, Middlesex College
 & Rutgers-Camden





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Appendix C: 2022 NSLVE Report

Awaiting NSLVE 2022 report

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Appendix D: Community Advisory Committee Members

Title	Organization
Director, Office of Public and Governmental Affairs	Middlesex County
Assistant Director, Division of Children’s Services	Middlesex County
Executive Director	Woodbridge Metro Chamber of Commerce
Middlesex County Surrogate	Middlesex County
Executive Director	Edison Chamber of Commerce
Executive Director	YMCA of Metuchen, Edison, Woodbridge & South Amboy
Department Head, Community Services	Middlesex County
Superintendent Assistant Superintendent	Middlesex County Magnet Schools
Director, Arts Institute	Middlesex County
President and CEO Director of Education	Junior Achievement of New Jersey
Superintendent	New Brunswick Public Schools
CEO and Director, Middlesex County Workforce Development Board and Office of Career Opportunity Policy Analyst, Office of Career Opportunity	Middlesex County
President	Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce
Mayor Chief of Staff	Woodbridge Township
Chief Executive Officer	Puerto Rican Action Board
President	New Brunswick Area Branch of the NAACP
Division Head, Historic Sites & History Services	Middlesex County
Trustee/Liaison to the Committee	Middlesex College
Team Leader, Youth Member for the BAPS	BAPS
Municipal Alliance Coordinator	Perth Amboy Brighton Avenue Community Center
Interim Chief Executive Officer/Compliance Officer	Jewish Renaissance Foundation
Executive Director/CEO	Puerto Rican Association for Human Development
Human Resources Manager	Tropical Cheese Industries, Inc.
Center Director	Edison Job Corps.
Chief of Staff	Office of Senator Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr.
Division Head, Arts and History Program Services	Middlesex County
Superintendent of Schools Assistant Superintendent of Schools	South River Public School District



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