

# MSJ VOTES



MOUNT ST. JOSEPH  
UNIVERSITY

2024

CIVIC ACTION PLAN

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## I. Executive Summary

This action plan, spearheaded by Caroline Meyer, Service Learning & Engagement Coordinator, outlines strategies to increase voter registration and turnout at Mount St. Joseph University. Collaborative efforts involve key campus entities and people, including the Career and Experiential Education Center, Office of Student Affairs, Student Government Association (SGA), Black Student Union (BSU), the Office of Mission and Belonging, and several faculty and staff members. External partnerships with organizations like the League of Women Voters, Hamilton County Board of Elections, Campus Vote Project, and the Democracy ALL IN Challenge further amplify the university's commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections.

Rooted in Catholic values, Mount St. Joseph University emphasizes interdisciplinary education, highlighting core values of integrity, social responsibility, and academic excellence. The institution's democracy program, initiated in 2015, has garnered recognition for increasing student voter registration and participation rates, earning distinctions such as the Voter Friendly Campus designation and acknowledgment from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. Washington Monthly also recognized Mount St. Joseph University as the 12th Best College for Student Voting in the United States in 2020.

The comprehensive plan for voter engagement at Mount St. Joseph University spans various electoral stages. Initiatives for voter registration involve Welcome Week activities, National Voter Registration Day events, and campus-wide email reminders. Voter education efforts encompass partnerships with local organizations, Constitution Day programming, distribution of information flyers, mass emails, external event promotion, debate watch parties, and social media campaigns. To facilitate ballot access, the university serves as a local polling location, provides residency proof letters, assists with registration checks, and communicates via email about absentee ballot access. Finally, efforts to increase voter turnout include campus-wide email reminders, marketing promotions for election dates, a social media campaign highlighting reasons to vote, and an Election Day tabling event.



## II. Leadership

Caroline Meyer, Service Learning & Engagement Coordinator, will be overseeing the work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. The Career & Experiential Education Center will serve as the backbone office for this project providing the leadership for strategic planning, project coordination, and program evaluation. They will be supported in this work by:

### ELECTION ENGAGEMENT COALITION

#### Chair:

- Caroline Meyer, Service Learning & Engagement Coordinator

#### Faculty and Staff:

- Alex Collins, Student Engagement and Success Program Coordinator
- Amanda Meeker, Director of the Career and Experiential Education Center
- Dr. Elizabeth Barkley, Professor of English and Chair
- Dr. Pete Robinson, Professor of History
- Dr. Pierre Rivolta, Associate Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice
- Emily Merz, Career & Co-op Coordinator
- Hayden Skinner-Fine, Career & Co-op Coordinator
- Jadah Jackson, Academic Exploration Program & PASS Advisor
- Kayla Barillas, Health Professions & Co-op Coordinator
- Maria DiTullio, Coordinator for Mission Ambassadors
- Summer Spille, Assistant Dean of Student Engagement & Leadership

#### Students:

- Annabel Vicars, Visual Communication Design Co-op
- Destiny Jones, Career & Experiential Education Department Student Worker
- Grace Wilking, Marketing Department Social Media Co-op

#### Community Partners:

- Campus Vote Project
- League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area
- Hamilton County Board of Election



### III. Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrate the commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement in multiple ways. Mount St. Joseph University (MSJ) champions election engagement because it complements our mission of "educating students through interdisciplinary liberal arts and professional curricula emphasizing values, integrity, and social responsibility." At MSJ, we are known for having strong community service, service learning, and student philanthropy programs; this is reflected in our inclusion in the President's Community Service Honor Roll in 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2015. While service to others is one of our core values, participation in the democratic process is also a cornerstone of what it means to be a responsible citizen.

Since beginning our democracy program in 2015, we have seen a significant increase in our student voter registration and our student voting rates on campus. By continuing to strengthen our democracy program, students will be more likely to develop across the engaged citizenship continuum, moving from personally responsible citizenship to participatory citizenship and then to transformative citizenship. Because of our success with turning students into student voters, NASPA designated Mount St. Joseph University as a Voter Friendly Campus in 2017-18, 2019-20, 201-22, and 2023-24. Additionally, the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge recognized the Mount with the Silver Seal for our student voting rate in 2016 and the Gold Seal for our student voting rate in 2018 and 2020. The Mount received a Highly Established Active Plan in 2022. We were also included in Washington Monthly's Best Colleges for Student Voting in 2018, 2019, and 2020. In 2020, Washington Monthly ranked Mount St. Joseph University as the 12th Best College for Student Voting in the United States.





## IV. Landscape

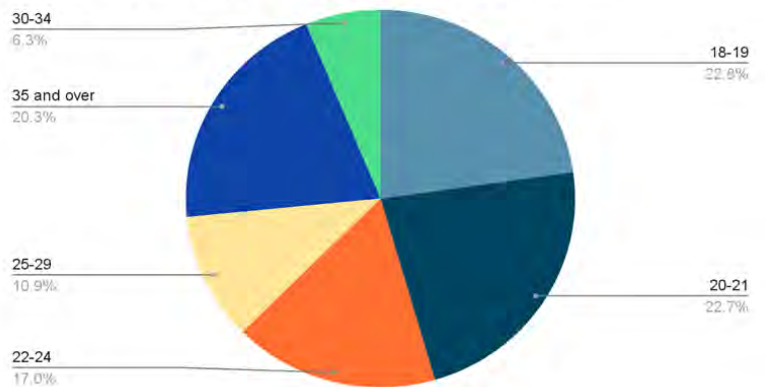
Mount St. Joseph University, situated in Delhi, Ohio, just minutes away from Downtown Cincinnati, is a vibrant Catholic academic community rooted in the spiritual values and vision of its founders, the Sisters of Charity. Established in 1920 as Ohio's first Catholic university for women, it transitioned to a coed institution in 1986 while maintaining strong ties to the Sisters of Charity as one of its sponsored ministries.

The university is dedicated to educating students through interdisciplinary liberal arts and professional curricula that emphasize core values such as integrity, social responsibility, and excellence in academic pursuits. Members of MSJ's community are guided by principles that include the integration of life and learning, respect for all individuals, appreciation for diversity in cultures and beliefs, and a commitment to service.

The Catholic identity of Mount St. Joseph University is deeply embedded in its mission, reflecting values of service, compassion, and charity. As a Catholic institution, it is committed to creating an inclusive environment where individuals of all faiths and backgrounds are welcomed, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect in the pursuit of knowledge and truth. The Sisters of Charity's legacy and vision continue to shape the university's identity, ensuring that its commitment to an inclusive environment is upheld. The campus thrives on the principles of the Catholic faith, with an emphasis on the integration of faith and tradition into every aspect of campus life.

As of 2022, Mount St. Joseph University boasts a diverse student population of 2,027, comprising 70% undergraduate students and 30% graduate and doctoral students. With a large commuter population at 87.2%, the university accommodates students with various lifestyles. Notably, over 50% of the student body consists of female students, and more than half are actively engaged in student athletics. MSJ remains committed to providing a liberal arts education that places a significant emphasis on values, integrity, and social responsibility, ensuring the holistic development of its diverse and dynamic student community.

Mount St. Joseph University Age Diversity Breakdown



Prior to establishing goals for civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus, we carefully considered the following information. Internally, our campus faces challenges in "get out the vote" efforts and voter registration. Mount St. Joseph, being a small Catholic university deeply connected to its mission and values, contends with conflicting political beliefs that may lead the university community to be hesitant about engaging in politics on campus. Students, overwhelmed by numerous emails, often overlook important information, necessitating the exploration of alternative channels such as Blackboard and social media for more effective communication. The absence of a Political Science program at Mount St. Joseph results in a shortage of politically engaged courses and a lack of visible faculty to reinforce civic engagement.

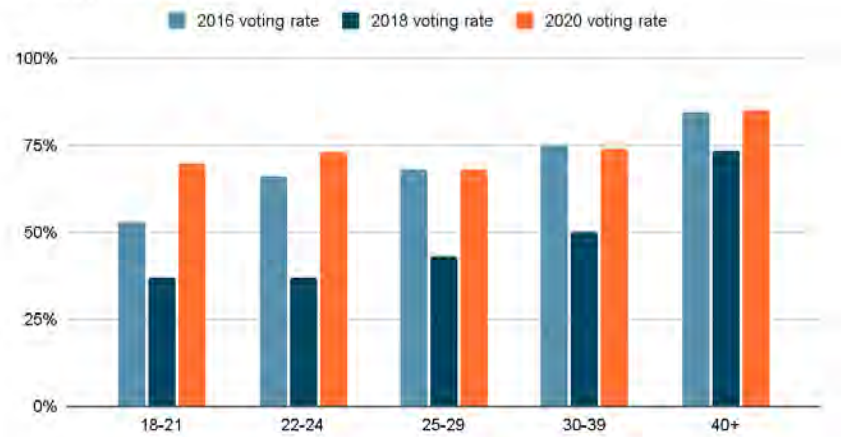
Conversely, our campus possesses strengths in our approach to voter engagement. The Mount's mission statement, values, and strategic plan explicitly acknowledge and encourage civic learning and democratic engagement, promoting participation as an integral part of life and learning. Various staff members throughout the campus, including those in the Career & Experiential Education Center, are dedicated to fostering civic learning and engagement. An Election Engagement Coalition, comprising staff, professors, and students, is actively positioned to implement initiatives related to civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus. The smaller size of our campus fosters a close-knit community, allowing for more personal and authentic interactions, which proves advantageous when encouraging students to participate in various engagement opportunities.



## V. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Our university possesses access to data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) for the election cycles of 2016, 2018, and 2020. However, the NSLVE data for the 2022 election cycle was not available for analysis for this report. Notably, during the 2020 presidential election, our institution achieved an impressive overall voting rate of 72%, surpassing the national average of 66%. Furthermore, our student voter registration rate stood at 90%, with 80% of registered students actively participating in the election. This marked an improvement from 2018, where 85.7% of Mount students were registered, and only 44.4% of the student body voted.

Voting Rate by Student Age



The upward trend in student voter registration has been consistent, rising from 84.5% in 2016 to 85.7% in 2018, and experiencing a significant jump of 4.3% from 2018 to 2020, reaching a remarkable 90%. Despite this positive trend, the voting rate witnessed a considerable decline during the 2018 midterm elections, dropping by 23.4% from 2016 to 2018, and rebounding with a 27.6% increase in the 2020 presidential election, achieving a student voting rate of 72%.

Contrastingly, the voting rate for students aged 40 years or older remained relatively stable across presidential and midterm election years, fluctuating from 84.5% in 2016 to 73.5% in 2018, and bouncing back to 85% for the 2020 presidential election. In contrast, the 18-21-year-old student demographic showed a lower likelihood of voting during midterm elections, with a voting rate of 37% in 2018, which rebounded to 70% in 2020. Other age groups also experienced significant drops in voting rates during midterm elections. In light of this data, we are strategically setting goals to enhance engagement in non-presidential election years.

Year	Student Voter Registration Rate	Voting Rate of Registered Students	Student Voting Rate
2016	84.5%	76.6%	64.7%
2018	85.7%	51.9%	44.4%
2020	90.0%	80.0%	72.0%



## IV. Goals

Our main goal is to maintain our voter engagement from the 2020 election cycle as we enter into another presidential election year. Our 2018 data dips between the presidential election years of 2016 and 2020. While the registration rate has increased each year, the voting rate dropped drastically in 2018, going from 64.7% in 2016 to 44.4% in 2018. This rebounded back up to 72% in 2020 for the presidential election. We want to maintain this increased level of engagement in 2024.

### Short-term Goals:

1. Maintain a 80% voter turnout in November 2024 election day
2. Identify and address any potential barriers to voting, ensuring that all students have easy access to information, resources, and polling places
3. Leverage existing university communication channels, such as newsletters, social media, and bulletin boards, to disseminate election-related information

### Long-term Goals:

1. Implement strategies proven to boost student voter turnout during local, state, and national elections
2. Incorporate civic engagement into our first-year experience course's curriculum
3. Strengthen collaborations with external organizations by forging and maintaining partnerships with community organizations, advocacy groups, and election officials to leverage resources and support initiatives that enhance voter engagement

## VOTER REGISTRATION CHECK



**Ohio Voter Registration Check:**  
  
<https://voterlookup.ohiosos.gov/voterlookup.aspx>

**Kentucky Voter Registration Check:**  
  
<https://vrsws.sos.ky.gov/vic/>

**Indiana Voter Registration Check:**  
  
<https://indianavoters.in.gov/>

**All Other States Voter Registration Check:**  
  
<https://www.nass.org/can-i-vote/voter-registration-status>

For more information:  
Email [Caroline Meyer@msj.edu](mailto:Caroline.Meyer@msj.edu)

## REGISTER TO VOTE



**Register to vote in Ohio:**  
  
<https://olvr.ohiosos.gov>

**Register to vote in Kentucky:**  
  
<https://vrsws.sos.ky.gov/ovrweb/>

**Register to vote in Indiana:**  
  
<https://indianavoters.in.gov>

**Register to vote in All Other States:**  
  
<https://vote.gov>

Career & Experiential Education Center

## VII. Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years.

### Voter registration

1. Table at orientation and Welcome Week so students have the opportunity to register and find information about registering to vote.
2. Host an event on campus to get as many students as we can to register to vote on National Voter Registration Day.
3. Disseminate campus-wide email reminders on voter registration and update website voter registration information on the Mount's external website and Mount's internal website.

### Voter education

1. Continue relationship with local League of Women Voters and distribute their nonpartisan voter guides (at the campus library and over email).
2. Offer Constitution Day programming and voter registration tables in our classroom building lobby.
3. Voter information flyers regularly distributed with non-partisan details on candidate issues, voter registration information, and promotions for early voting.
4. Send mass emails regarding voter information and registration in the beginning weeks of the Fall 2024 semester. The email will include links to our website and other resources on voting, as well as information for upcoming events.
5. Host debate watch parties, during which students will learn about candidates and their various viewpoints related to their candidacy and the election.
6. Coordinate with faculty members to encourage their students to register to vote in the first weeks of classes, including speaking to first year experience classes to inform students on how to vote.
7. Organize social media campaigns to get students active and voting on campus by sending regular updates through various social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to remind students of important deadlines and other pertinent information regarding the elections, deadlines, and the candidates.

## Ballot access

1. The Mount serves as a local polling location. This will be advertised to students who will also be encouraged to work as poll workers.
2. Provide proof of residency letters for students who registered to vote using their dorm address.
3. Assist students with voter registration checks, polling location checks, absentee ballot requests, and absentee ballot checks.
4. Disseminate campus-wide email reminders about absentee ballot access.

## Voter turnout

1. Disseminate campus-wide email reminder about the general election.
2. Promote key election dates in print marketing and online.
3. Facilitate a “Why Are You Voting This November?” social media campaign.
4. Facilitate an Election Day celebration.





## VII. Reporting & Evaluation

This action plan is devised to fulfill the requirements mandated by both the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and the Voter Friendly Campus Designation. Internally, it will be distributed via email to members of our campus coalition and made publicly accessible on our website, featured in the Fall 2024 newsletter for students, faculty, and staff.

Mount St. Joseph aims to assess campaign success by analyzing NSLVE data, identifying year-over-year improvements, and discerning effective strategies. Following a debrief at the end of each year, we will reassess and adjust short and long-term goals accordingly.

In tandem with NSLVE results, we will conduct campus-wide surveys or qualitative data to gauge students' knowledge of voting tools and available resources. This real-time data will inform our civic engagement efforts, ensuring adaptability to enhance student participation in voter registration, education, and overall engagement. The compiled and assessed data will be shared with the Mount St. Joseph University community and made public on the university's website.





# MOUNT ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY

## CAREER & EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION CENTER



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