



## **Student Voter and Civic Engagement Campus Plan 2024-2025**

## **SUNY New Paltz 2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan**

Developed by:

### **Student Voter and Civic Engagement Committee**

**Leslie Gutierrez, Community & Civic Engagement Coordinator**

**Joel Lefkowitz, Faculty, Political Science Department**

**Brian Obach, Faculty, Sociology Department, UUP**

**Eric Wood, NYPIRG**

**Jazmine Alvarez Webster, Student**

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**Andrea Frank, Faculty, Art Department**

**Vivienne Knouse-Frenzer, Student**

**Patrick Kelly, Student**

### **Community Partners**

**Ashley Torres, Ulster County Board of Elections (Democratic  
Commissioner)**

**John P. Quigley, Ulster County Board of Elections (Republican  
Commissioner)**

## **Executive Summary:**

This action plan is a collaborative initiative between student affairs, academic affairs, and student governance at SUNY New Paltz. The objective is to establish an enduring partnership that fosters civic engagement across the campus community. Designed as a living document, the plan will be regularly updated to reflect new partnerships, feedback, and collaborative efforts. The primary focus of this plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic participation by boosting student voter registration, education, and turnout.

For the 2024-2025 election cycle, the goals include strengthening partnerships between the college, student body, and local organizations to create a dynamic campaign aimed at voter education, registration, and overall civic engagement. Through these collaborative efforts, the SUNY New Paltz community seeks to foster a culture of democratic participation and civic responsibility.

## **Leadership:**

Our leadership team includes the following, campus groups, and organizations:

NYPIRG

Student Association

The League of Women Voters

Leslie Gutierrez, Community & Civic Engagement Coordinator

Joel Lefkowitz, faculty, Political Science

Brian Obach, faculty, Sociology, UUP

Eric Wood, NYPIRG

Andrea Frank: faculty, Art Department

Scott Minkoff: faculty, Political Science

Patrick Kelly, student

Jazmine Alvarez Webster, Executive Vice President of Student Association

Mark McFadden, Interim Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs

Deborah Marr, The League of Women Voters

Benjamin Snazelle, Vice President of Programming of Student Association

## **Commitment:**

## **SUNY New Paltz Mission**

In the proud tradition of SUNY, the State University of New York at New Paltz is committed to providing high quality, affordable education to students from all social and economic backgrounds. We are a faculty and campus community dedicated to the construction of a **vibrant intellectual/creative public forum** which reflects and celebrates the diversity of our society and encourages and supports active participation in scholarly and artistic activity. SUNY New Paltz is an active contributor to the schools, community institutions and economic/cultural life of our region. We are selective in admitting students who show promise of thriving in a learning environment which is challenging, student-centered, and personalized. **Our goal is for students to gain knowledge, skills, and confidence to contribute as productive members of their communities and professions and active citizens in a democratic nation and a global society.**

We are the only residential public university in the mid-Hudson region. We offer undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences which serve as a core for professional programs in the fine and performing arts, education, health care, business, and engineering. Our location in the scenic Hudson Valley midway between the State Capital of Albany and metropolitan New York City provides unique opportunities for enriching our academic programs. We are a diverse faculty of distinguished scholars and artists who collaborate across the disciplines and professional areas to inspire our students to a love of learning, a meaningful engagement with the life of the mind, and **an involvement in public service.**

SUNY New Paltz is known to be an institution in which students are especially engaged in civic life. It led the SUNY System in voter turnout in the 2020 All In challenge in which the university participated, earning a Gold Medal for a voter turnout of over 70%. In the 2022 cycle we earned the silver seal. With this plan we are seeking to achieve a level of voter participation to qualify for a Gold Medal or higher. Our commitment to civic life is also reflected in the level of student engagement with all types of clubs and organizations, which number over 200. This culture of community engagement is facilitated at all levels of the institution. As quoted in the SUNY New Paltz Mission Statement, “Our goal is for students to gain knowledge, skills, and confidence to contribute as productive members of their communities and...active citizens in a democratic nation and a global society.” This sentiment is integral to the learning goals of the university as a whole which includes facilitating students’ ability to “attain an understanding of yourself as a citizen and community member with the knowledge and ability to engage others...” The university learning goals explicitly seek to “promote active engagement in communities (from local to global), critical reflection, and personal responsibility.”

SUNY New Paltz is a member of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities’ (AASCU) nonpartisan American Democracy Project, which supports higher education institutions in preparing informed and engaged global citizens. Membership in the project commits the university “to model open, democratic engagement on

important issues from multiple perspectives in their communities” using “meaningful and engaging methods of preparing students to participate in a thriving democracy.”

The university’s commitment to nonpartisan democratic engagement is communicated to the campus community through a variety of avenues. SUNY New Paltz’s membership in the American Democracy Project (ADP), a nonpartisan initiative by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), is one of the keyways the institution demonstrates its dedication to preparing informed and engaged citizens. This project encourages students to engage with important issues from diverse perspectives, supporting a culture of open dialogue and civic responsibility. Additionally, the university’s success in fostering a strong voter turnout and promoting civic involvement is actively highlighted, reinforcing the message that democratic engagement is not only encouraged but celebrated at SUNY New Paltz. As a public institution, all official action is strictly nonpartisan. State law and SUNY policy, shared broadly with the campus community, states that “employees may not use their official position to advocate for a political candidate.” At the same time, the campus serves as an open forum in which “Neither the University nor its representatives acting in an official capacity, may take or refuse any action or make any statement that aids or hinders a candidate.” Specific policies regarding nonpartisan democratic engagement include the following:

## **Political Campaigning Policy**

As an academic institution, we recognize and welcome the educational benefits of exposing students to political debate and information, including partisan political speech. We have made some of our facilities available to a wide range of outside speakers and expressive activities and, therefore, have legal obligations to open such facilities to political speech, as well. In handling requests for permission to use campus facilities, we must be guided by the principle of viewpoint neutrality and evenhanded treatment as to terms and conditions of use (i.e. rental charges, security costs, insurance, etc.).

With regards to political speech and speakers, the State University has placed certain limits on access to its facilities. It has been a longstanding State University policy – going back to at least the 1970s – to prohibit use of State University property for partisan political candidate fundraisers. This policy is consistent with our legal obligations, the educational mission of the State University, and other strong interests, such as avoidance of the inevitable impression of endorsing particular candidates. The policies that address the most commonly asked questions are the New York State Public Officer's Law and SUNY policies on facilities usage for non-commercial purposes. The applicable provisions are:

### **Public Officer’s Law:**

No state employee may use his/her official title, position or authority in any campaign activities, including untargeted mass mailings. No state resources of any type may be used in furtherance of these activities, including, but not limited to, telephone, office supplies, postage, photocopying machines, computers (including e-mail) and support staff (see Advisory Opinion No. 93-9) nor may campaign activities be conducted from a

state office or during state business hours unless leave is taken. Finally, no state employee may solicit from subordinates, as this practice is strictly forbidden by Civil Service law §107. (See also Election Law §17-158.)

**Use of Facilities by Non-Commercial Organizations and Use of Facilities by Third Parties for Free Speech:**

Political organizations are included in SUNY's definition of non-commercial organizations that are permitted use of campus facilities and in the College's policy on Use of Facilities by Third Parties for Free Speech. All non-commercial organizations are required to obtain a revocable permit for each use of campus facilities. These permits, obtained through Student Activities and Union Services for use of the Student Union Building (SUB), Conference Services and University Police for other campus locations, establish the terms and conditions for use of facilities, including reimbursement for any associated costs. If a political candidate wishes to speak in one of the free speech zones identified in the Use of Facilities by Third Parties for Free Speech policy during non-blackout dates outlined in the policy, they should contact the Office of the Vice President for Administration and Finance. The Use of Facilities by Third Parties for Free Speech policy may be found at this link: [Use of Facilities by Third Parties for Free Speech](#). The SUNY policy on Use of Facilities by Non-Commercial Organizations imposes the following additional conditions for use of facilities by partisan political organizations:

That the proposed meeting gives promise of contributing to the educational purposes of the institution.

That the institution sees a reasonable possibility of making the facilities available for other viewpoints to be presented.

**Distribution of Campaign Materials:**

Individuals campaigning for office shall have access to students and employees in parking lots, entrances to buildings and other areas to which members of the public are admitted, provided that such activities do not inhibit the movement of people or vehicles, impair the safe and efficient conduct of the operation or interfere with work duties or work performance. Individuals are not allowed to campaign in residence halls.

Individual campaign posters are not permitted in public spaces on campus. Meeting notices and other organizational materials shall not be hung upon, posted or otherwise affixed to the walls, doors, windows, trees or other appurtenances of facilities and buildings owned or leased by the state.

More information on State University policies regarding use of facilities by non-commercial organizations can be found at this website (scroll down under Policy I to Section K: Use of university facilities for political purposes).

The SUNY New Paltz President Darrel Wheeler is a current signatory to the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation most recently signing the commitment in 2020.

Previously, our institution has developed and submitted an action plan to ALL IN for 2020, which can be found on our ALL IN campus page:

<https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/suny-new-paltz/>

## Landscape:

New York State allows for voter registration online, by mail and in person.

To qualify for voter registration in New York State, you must:

- be a United States Citizen;
- be 18 years old (you may pre-register at 16 or 17 but cannot vote until you are 18);
- be a resident of this state and the county, city or village for at least 30 days before the election;
- not be in prison for a felony conviction;
  - [learn more about felon registration rights](#)
- not be adjudged mentally incompetent by a court;
- not claim the right to vote elsewhere

Voting Deadlines:

Voter Registration Deadline for General Election: October 26

Early Voting for the General Election: October 26-November 3

General Election: November 5

Absentee/Early Voting by Mail for General Election

Last day for Board of Elections to RECEIVE application by mail or online portal:  
October 26

Last day to apply in person for general election ballot: November 4

Last day to postmark general election ballot: November 5

Last day to deliver general election ballot in person to county board or poll site:  
November 5

SUNY New Paltz is a public 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2017. Our institution is designated as the following: Predominantly White Institution, emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution, Rural Serving Institution.

Our campus demographic and voting data:

SUNY New Paltz has 7,489 students.

### **Enrollment:**

Undergraduates: 6,111

Graduate students: 916

### **Residential Vs. Commuter:**

48% of our 6,478 undergraduate students live on-campus and the remainder are considered commuters.

100% of our 1,033 graduate students are considered commuters for the simple reason that we do not provide housing for grad students.

Combined: 44% of all students (graduates and undergraduates) live on-campus with the remaining 56% considered to be commuters.

**Diversity:**

- 5% Asian, non-Hispanic
- 7% Black or African American, non-Hispanic
- 23% Hispanic/Latino
- 1% International (nonresidents)
- 3% Race and/or ethnicity unknown
- 3% Two or more races, non-Hispanic
- 59% White, non-Hispanic

Our undergraduate student population includes students from 15 foreign countries.

**Female/Male Ratio:**

64% female, 36% male

**Age**

Under 18	251
18 - 19	2288
20 - 21	2216
22 - 24	852
25 - 29	239
30-39	126
40 - 49	32
50 & Over	18

**Geographic Origin**

NY State	95.9%
Other US	3.1%
International	1.0%

SUNY New Paltz has authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) and will receive campus voting data for the 2022 election in fall 2023. Our NSLVE authorization runs through 2033.

Our 2022 campus voting rate was 34.3%

Our 2022 campus voter registration rate was 79.8%

Our 2020 campus voting rate was 70.9%.



Our 2020 campus voter registration rate was 87%.

Our 2018 campus voting rate was 42.8%.

Our 2018 campus voting rate was 79.9%.

SUNY New Paltz has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals of recognition for past elections: 2016 Bronze, 2018 Gold, 2020 Gold.

Additionally, our institution had a student recognized on the 2022 ALL IN Student Voting Honor Roll for their efforts to support and increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voting.

SUNY New Paltz participates in the following initiatives to support the development and implementation of our nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts on campus: National Voter Registration Day (2020).

### Goals:

Our institution's nonpartisan democratic engagement goals are:

To register 90% of eligible voters and to achieve an 80%+ student voter turn out in the 2024 presidential election.

To register 60% of eligible voters and to achieve an 50%+ student voter turn out in the 2026 presidential election.

Distribute Voter Registration Forms in welcome packet to every incoming student at New Student Orientation starting summer 2025.

To host a voter registration informative presentation during orientation sessions.

Involve Residence Life in creating Civic Engagement Bulletin Boards and Posters in each residence hall.

### Strategy:

SUNY New Paltz will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

Summer

- Host County Board of Election Polling Sites
- Evaluate Proposed Voter Reform Policies in New York State (early voting, same day registration)
- Social media Campaign for primary election

- Invitations to non-partisan, non-profit organizations to schedule voter registration days in September (current limit of 2 per organization)
- Table at all orientations
  - 6 first year and 4 transfer orientation during service fair event

#### August

- Orientation Part II – Welcome to all New Students
- Welcome week - New Paltz Fair Tabling
- Welcome week – Club & Involvement Fair Tabling
- Deadline for voter registration ambassadors
- All-Student E-mail – 1st Week of Classes
  - Sign up for election inspector training
  - Where to register to vote and important deadlines
- Voter Registration Training and Education Workshop for Clubs, and Students
  - Candidate Forum and Political Campaigning Guidelines

#### September

- Informative workshops
- Order giveaway items for students that register to vote
- Presidential Debate Watch Party
- Election Inspector training
  - Offer two one day training sessions
- Constitution Day trivia event
  - Student Union – Pocket Constitutions
- National Voter Registration Day
- Launch #HawktheVote Campaign
- Start scheduling presentation for in classroom Voter Registration

#### October

- Voter education week
  - Workshop: Should I mail in my ballot or vote here?
  - Register Mock election booth with ulster county board of election
  - Make a plan & create posters for voting initiatives to use during pep rally
  - Rock the vote pep rally/fair
  - Learn about the ballot workshop
- Last Call for Voter Registration Rally
- Vice President Debate Watch Party
- Tabling during Make a difference day
  - Voter registration & handing out pamphlets with important deadlines
- Voter Registration Deadline
- Change of Address Deadline
- Social Media Trivia Tuesday's (Through Election Day)

#### November

- Do You Know Where Your Polling Place Is Tabling (Commuter Parking Areas)
- Coordinate with Faculty for Walk Over/ #VoteTogether

- Pre-Election “How to Vote” All-Student E-mail and Tabling
- Host Board of Election Polling Site
- Election Day Voter Appreciation Booth Outside Polling Site
- Election Day Watch Party
- Dinner and Discourse: Election Day aftermath what now

#### December

- Send out all student email about staying in involved for the following semester and flyer with some finalized events for the spring semester

#### January

- Host welcome back hawks Dinner and Discourse event about the Inauguration

#### February

- Send out all student email for new members to join the civic engagement committee

#### March

- Housing Renewal – Changing Your Voter Registration Address Reminder (for either on campus location change or move to off-campus address. (New Initiative)
  - Targeted e-mail to those that did not renew on-campus housing
- Social media with updates on voter registration (if student moved)

#### April

- Host Federal Primary Board of Election Polling Site, presidential election cycles and other local elections, as needed.
- Promotion of local town/village elections

#### May

- Develop Marketing Efforts for Following Year

### Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

SUNY New Paltz will use the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement to evaluate the increase of student voting by comparing our campus voter turnout and voter registration rates to past elections to measure progress on increasing both.

Participation at all scheduled events will be monitored. The Civic Engagement Committee will assess each event and consider which activities were successful and what can be improved.

### Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN’s website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/suny-new-paltz/>.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our past NSLVE reports, which can also be found on our campus page above.

NSLVE reports will be posted on the New Paltz campus web site and distributed through campus media (Daily Digest, Alumni magazine etc.)

### **Campus and SUNY Resources**

- New Paltz Campus Guidelines for Political Campaigning, Distribution of Campaign Materials and Activity (<http://www.newpaltz.edu/current/politicalpolicy.html>)
- New Paltz Voter Registration Information for Students (<https://www.newpaltz.edu/saus/voter-registration-information-for-students>)
- SUNY Voter Engagement Task Force / Best Practices (<https://system.suny.edu/university-life/voter-registration/>)

### **County and State Resources**

- NYS Board of Elections (<http://www.elections.ny.gov/INDEX.html>)
- NYS State Voter Registration (<http://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingRegister.html>)
- Instructions for Voting Absentee (<http://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingAbsentee.html>)
- Ulster County Board of Elections (<http://ulstercountyny.gov/elections>)
- State of New York Election Law (2008) ([http://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/university-life/2008NY ElectionLaw.pdf](http://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/university-life/2008NY%20ElectionLaw.pdf))

### **Voter Engagement Resources**

- Campus Compact (<https://compact.org/initiatives/campus-vote-home/>)
- Campus Democracy Challenge – (<https://www.allinchallenge.org/>)
- Campus Election Engagement Project (<https://campuselect.org/>)
- Campus Vote Project (<http://campusvoteproject.org/>)
- Non Profit Vote (<https://www.nonprofitvote.org/>)
- Rock the Vote (<https://www.rockthevote.org/>)
- Student Government Resource Center (<https://studentgovresources.org/voter-engagement/>)
- Students Learn, Students Vote (<https://www.studentslearnstudentsvote.org>)
- Vote Everywhere, The Andrew Goodman Foundation (<https://andrewgoodman.org/vote-everywhere/>)
- Voter Friendly Campus Designation – Campus Vote Project & NASPA (<https://www.voterfriendlycampus.org>)
- #Vote Together – (<https://votetogetherusa.org/>)