

SJC VOTES!



**Saint Joseph's College of
Maine 2024 Democratic
Engagement Action Plan**

Executive Summary

This nonpartisan engagement action plan for the 2024 election was developed by Saint Joseph's College of Maine located in Standish, Maine for the 2024 election. This plan aims to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement, focusing on student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 election cycle. Our goal is to support all in engaging in the voting process, with a particular emphasis on first-time voters on their voting rights and how to successfully engage in their first election.

After the negative effects on student engagement that was a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, our community has begun to see a resurgence in student motivation and participation. With increasing size of incoming classes and their accompanying morale and energy, our aim is to set a positive culture on campus for voting and democratic engagement that pervades during their full time at our institution and is carried with them into their adult life. Our Democratic Engagement Plans from 2020 and 2022 provide a framework that this plan builds upon, with refinement and additions that establishes an improved roadmap for the 2024 election cycle.



SJC Votes is supported by several stakeholders, including student life and engagement representatives, campus ministry, academics, local township officials and local election boards. In previous years we had student leaders incorporated in our plan, and while we do not currently have a highlighted representative, we recognize that this is a key aspect and plan to fill this role by the end of spring 2024. SJC Votes also works with the platform Motivote, which breaks down the step-by-step voting process to ensure students are fully informed about all of their voting options. Motivote ensures that any student subscribed to our SJC Votes page can get registered in Maine or in their home state, and connects them with things such as absentee ballots and local deadlines depending on how and where they choose to vote. This tool allows us to assign points to each task and incentivise students through challenges and rewards, which is something we have introduced into this action plan to increase engagement and motivation surrounding voting.

This plan was developed in the fall of 2023 and will be implemented during the spring and fall semesters of the 2024 academic year. At the conclusion of the fall 2024 semester, our initiative will be assessed for their effectiveness. While overall voter engagement and turnout is our goal, the following are additional goals for Saint Joseph's College for the 2024 election:

1. Create voter awareness through tabling, programming displays, and a robust social media campaign that utilizes several platforms and campus resources.
2. Engage in non-partisan voter education by providing a comprehensive candidate awareness guide and implementing a student-led panel discussion with representatives from our political science department.
3. Facilitate opportunities for voting by providing transportation to the local polling station on election day, collaborating with the Town Clerk to assist students in the voting process.
4. Establish a baseline of voter turnout for future election data goals.
5. Strengthen Civic Engagement with the Motivote Voter Engagement Platform.



Leadership

Our leadership team comprises dedicated individuals committed to fostering democratic engagement on campus and beyond:

Liz Wiesen - Dean of Student Life

Joy Pulsifer - Assistant Dean of Student Life and Title 9 Coordinator

Michael Theriault - Community Coordinator and Student Engagement

Kathryn Cody Russell - Director of Campus Ministry

Emily Dion - Student Life Graduate Assistant

Holly Sandborn - Manager of Student Accessibility Services

Student Leader (Student not selected yet, see below for recruiting information)

Mary Chapman - Standish Town Hall Clerk (off-campus partner)

Nonprofit Partners:

Campus Compact

League of Women Voters

Motivote



Leadership Succession Plan

The purpose of this succession plan is to establish a transition of leadership for the democratic action plan at Saint Joseph's College, ensuring the continued success and growth of nonpartisan democratic engagement initiatives. By implementing this leadership succession plan, Saint Joseph's College aims to ensure the smooth transition of leadership for its democratic action plan, fostering a sustained commitment to nonpartisan democratic engagement among its student leaders and committee members.

1. Identify Key Roles and Responsibilities

- a. **Democratic Action Plan Coordinator:** The primary leader responsible for overseeing the implementation of the democratic action plan.
- b. **Leadership Members:** Individuals responsible for specific aspects such as voter awareness, voter education, voting opportunities, civic engagement with external partners, and the Motivote Voter Engagement Platform.

2. Current Leadership Training and Criteria

- a. Conduct informative sessions for the current leadership members, focusing on the details and goals of the democratic action plan.
- b. Provide exposure to successful strategies, best practices, and lessons learned from past initiatives.
- c. Define specific criteria for selecting the Democratic Action Plan Coordinator and leadership members, including a passion for democratic engagement, organizational skills, and the ability to collaborate effectively.
- d. Establish a process for self-nomination and/or recommendation by faculty, staff, or peers.



3. Student Leadership Recruitment Process

- a. Announce leadership roles well in advance, providing ample time for interested individuals to express their interest.
- b. Promote leadership opportunities through campus-wide communication channels, emphasizing the importance of democratic engagement.
- c. Review students who are interested and assess their understanding of the democratic action plan, commitment to its goals, and leadership potential.

4. Transition Period

- a. Implement a transition period during which the current Democratic Action Plan Coordinator collaborates with the newly selected coordinator.
- b. Facilitate knowledge sharing and transfer, including documentation of strategies, contacts, and insights gained from past experiences and initiatives.

5. Continuous Training

- a. Develop an ongoing training program to keep the coordinator and leadership members informed about changes in elections laws, engagement strategies and technological advancements.

6. Evaluation and Feedback

- a. Gather feedback from stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff and partnering organizations.
- b. Utilize feedback to refine and enhance the leadership succession plan.

7. Institutionalizing Succession

- a. Document the leadership succession plan as a part of the leadership team's policies and procedures.
- b. Ensure that the plan is integrated into the broader framework of civic engagement initiative and is endorsed by relevant administrative bodies.



Commitment

Saint Joseph's College of Maine Mission and Vision Statement

Saint Joseph's College of Maine, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy and animated by the vision of Catherine McAuley, is a Catholic college in the liberal arts tradition distinguished by its welcoming community. We foster an ongoing dialogue between faith and reason so as to prepare our learners to live meaningful lives that improve the world around them. In fulfillment of its mission, Saint Joseph's College of Maine will be a diverse, inclusive, and collaborative community that forms individuals who practice humility, justice, and compassion, as Jesus did, in solidarity with the marginalized.

At Saint Joseph's College, our commitment to nonpartisan democratic engagement is deeply rooted in our core values of faith, excellence, integrity, inclusion, respect, compassion and justice. These values serve as the guiding principles shaping our institutional mission, learning outcomes, curriculum, and co-curricular activities. By aligning our commitment to nonpartisan engagement with our core values and ensuring its visibility throughout the institution, Saint Joseph's College aims to foster a community that actively embraces the principles of democracy in all facets of its academic and co-curricular life. The following is a thorough analysis of how this commitment and integration of democratic principles coincides with our core values:



1. Faith:

- **Commitment:** Upholding the principles of democracy as a reflection of our faith in the dignity and agency of every individual.
- **Integration:** Weaving democratic engagement into the fabric of our faith-based community, recognizing the importance of civic responsibility in living out our shared values.

2. Excellence:

- **Commitment:** Striving for excellence in fostering informed and active citizenship among our students and community.
- **Integration:** Demonstrating excellence by setting high standards for democratic engagement initiatives, ensuring quality in voter education, registration, and turnout efforts.

3. Integrity:

- **Commitment:** Conducting democratic engagement with honesty, transparency, and a commitment to the democratic process.
- **Integration:** Embedding integrity into our democratic engagement initiatives, emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior in all aspects of civic participation.

4. Inclusion:

- **Commitment:** Ensuring that all voices are heard and represented in the democratic process.
- **Integration:** Promoting an inclusive democratic culture within the institution, reflecting our commitment to diversity and equal participation.

5. Respect:

- **Commitment:** Treating each individual with dignity and respect, recognizing their right to participate in the democratic process.
- **Integration:** Infusing respect into our democratic engagement initiatives, fostering an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and heard.



6. Compassion:

- **Commitment:** Exercising compassion by actively engaging in initiatives that address societal challenges through the democratic process.
- **Integration:** Incorporating compassion into our civic engagement efforts, emphasizing the role of democratic participation in creating positive social change.

7. Justice:

- **Commitment:** Advocating for justice both within and outside our campus community through democratic means.
- **Integration:** Integrating the pursuit of justice into our democratic engagement initiatives, aligning our commitment with the broader goals of societal fairness and equity.

Visible and Widely Communicated Commitment:

Our commitment to nonpartisan democratic engagement is not only articulated in our core values but is also visible and widely communicated internally and externally. This commitment is evident through:

- **Learning Outcomes:** Integration of democratic values and civic responsibilities into our educational outcomes, ensuring that students graduate with a strong understanding of their role in a democratic society.
- **Curriculum:** Incorporation of democratic engagement themes across various academic disciplines, reinforcing the importance of civic participation in diverse fields of study.
- **Co-curricular Activities:** Hosting events, workshops, and activities that actively promote democratic engagement, creating a campus culture that values and practices civic responsibility.



Landscape

Saint Joseph's College, a private 4-year institution, became a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation in 2020. We joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2016. We have hovered around 60% voter participation for the 2016 and 2018 elections, with approximately 1000 on-campus students, and 1700 students enrolled in online programs. The Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on our democratic engagement, and rendered us without much data about our engagement in recent elections. In 2024, we will have approximately 700 undergraduate students, with approximately 575 of these students being residential. The data from this year will provide us with a greater understanding of our campus' current engagement and climate around voting, and allow us to improve our action plan for the following year.

One large challenge our students have expressed is not knowing they are able to vote in Standish, Maine as students of the college. Their status of students gives them residency in Standish, and therefore allows them to vote at this Town Hall during their 4 years as a student. An additional challenge and area for improvement is educating our students on absentee voting and facilitating them in this process. Motivote, an online program that assists students in registering to vote, helps them obtain the correct absentee ballots, and will remind them to update their registration, their polling location, and election dates. This program is essential in getting students to submit their votes, whether it is in person at the polls or from the comfort of their own dorm room.



Goals

Create Voter Awareness:

- Short-Term (2024): Implement tabling, programming, displays, and social media campaigns to raise voter awareness leading up to the 2024 election.
- Long-Term (2026-2028): Develop a sustained, multi-year voter awareness plan, incorporating innovative strategies to engage new students and reinforce civic responsibility annually.
- SMARTIE Characteristics: Develop specific strategies for different voter demographics, measure awareness through increased engagement metrics, set ambitious yet realistic targets, establish a timeline for continuous voter awareness initiatives, and ensure inclusivity in outreach efforts.

Non-Partisan Voter Education:

- Short-Term (2024): Disseminate a comprehensive candidate awareness guide for the 2024 election, providing unbiased information on candidates and issues.
- Long-Term (2026-2028): Establish an ongoing voter education program that includes workshops, seminars, and educational resources, ensuring students are well-informed for each election cycle.
- SMARTIE Characteristics: Measure the effectiveness of education programs through increased voter knowledge, set specific educational objectives, set ambitious but achievable long-term goals, and ensure equitable access to educational resources.



Provide Voting Opportunities:

- Short-Term (2024): Collaborate with the Town Clerk to provide transportation to local polling stations for the 2024 election.
- Long-Term (2026-2028): Advocate for on-campus voting locations, explore early voting options, and establish a permanent transportation plan for all elections.
- SMARTIE Characteristics: Develop specific plans for transportation, set measurable goals for increased voting opportunities, be ambitious in advocating for on-campus voting, ensure realistic implementation timelines, and promote inclusive access to voting.

Establish Voter Turnout Baseline:

- Short-Term (2024): Establish a baseline for voter turnout in the 2024 election, capturing data on student participation.
- Long-Term (2026-2028): Set a goal for consistent voter turnout growth, aiming for a specified percentage increase in each subsequent election.
- SMARTIE Characteristics: Define specific metrics for baseline data, set measurable targets for increased voter turnout, be ambitious in the percentage growth, establish realistic expectations based on historical data, and ensure inclusive strategies for engagement.

Strengthen Civic Engagement with Motivote:

- Short-Term (2024): Implement the Motivote Voter Engagement Platform to encourage student participation in the 2024 election.
- Long-Term (2026-2028): Expand the utilization of Motivote to cover local elections, engage students in civic discussions, and establish it as a permanent feature of campus civic engagement.
- SMARTIE Characteristics: Set specific objectives for Motivote utilization, measure engagement metrics over time, be ambitious in expanding Motivote's scope, set realistic implementation timelines, and ensure equitable access to the platform.



NSLVE

As noted in our landscape section, our data for democratic engagement over the past years has been more limited and our goal is to develop a baseline with this 2024 election cycle that results in more firm findings that can inform our future initiatives and action plan.



Strategy

Short-Term Tactics (2024):

- In-Person Voter Engagement/Education Events:
 - Objective: Conduct weekly in-person events to engage students in conversations about civic responsibility, voter registration, and election issues.
 - Tactics: Host guest speakers, facilitate open forums, and organize workshops on the importance of voting, understanding political issues, and the electoral process.
- Voter Registration Drives:
 - Objective: Increase voter registration rates on campus.
 - Tactics: Organize targeted registration drives during peak times, such as orientation week, and collaborate with local election officials for on-campus registration events. Implement digital registration initiatives and provide incentives for registration.
- Social Media and Email Marketing:
 - Objective: Promote events and voter awareness through online channels.
 - Tactics: Develop a comprehensive social media calendar, featuring regular posts on voting deadlines, candidate information, and election-related news. Launch an email marketing campaign to disseminate critical information and drive engagement.
- Flying a VOTE Flag:
 - Objective: Symbolize the institution's commitment to democratic engagement.
 - Tactics: Install a prominent VOTE flag on the campus center flagpole, attracting attention and fostering a sense of civic pride. Utilize this visual representation as a conversation starter and engagement tool.



- Partnership with Motivote:
 - Objective: Strengthen civic engagement through a digital platform.
 - Tactics: Actively promote Motivote among students, integrate it into existing events and initiatives, and incentivize participation through rewards or recognition. Monitor engagement metrics and use feedback to optimize Motivote integration.

Long-Term Strategies (2026-2028):

- Integration into Academic Curriculum:
 - Objective: Embed democratic engagement into the academic experience.
 - Strategies: Collaborate with faculty to integrate democratic engagement topics into existing courses and develop opportunities for students such as debate forums and other academic opportunities.
- Integration of Civic Engagement into Orientation Programs:
 - Objective: Instill civic responsibility from the beginning of a student's journey.
 - Strategies: Collaborate with the orientation team to incorporate civic engagement components into the orientation process. This could include informational sessions, voter registration drives, and interactive activities that introduce students to the importance of civic participation.
- Research and Data Analysis:
 - Objective: Continuously assess and improve democratic engagement efforts.
 - Strategies: Implement regular surveys to gauge the effectiveness of initiatives. Analyze voter turnout data and demographic information to identify areas for improvement. Use research findings to refine strategies and set informed goals for future engagement.



Reporting

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/saint-josephs-college/>.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our NSLVE reports which are posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website.

Our campus NSLVE reports will be shared with the campus community, with specific emphasis on the student body and democratic engagement leadership team. This data will inform the changes and modifications needed to be done to the action plan. In sharing this information with students, it will increase their exposure to and engagement with democratic processes and voting education material, and their own voting results.



Evaluation

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

Saint Joseph's College has authorized NSLVE. We plan to use surveys, a debrief with each of the key stakeholders as well as an evaluation of all data collected to create a long term voter engagement strategy for future elections.

Surveys:

- **Tools:** Utilize a combination of internal surveys, external surveys, and specialized tools for evaluating specific aspects of the action plan.
- **Metrics:** Design surveys with a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions to assess awareness levels, engagement satisfaction, and the perceived impact of various initiatives. Include questions about Motivote usage, voter education effectiveness, and overall civic engagement experiences.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Internal surveys will be conducted before, during, and after plan implementation, capturing short-term metrics related to voter registration, pledges, volunteers, and event attendance. The data will be analyzed by the evaluation team to identify trends and assess the effectiveness of different strategies.

Debriefs with Key Stakeholders:

- **Tools:** Conduct structured debrief sessions with key stakeholders, including members of the leadership team, student organizations, faculty, and community partners.
- **Metrics:** Collect qualitative insights on the strengths and weaknesses of the action plan. Gather feedback on collaboration experiences, identify challenges faced during implementation, and uncover opportunities for improvement. Document success stories and areas where additional support is needed.



- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Debriefs will include discussions on event effectiveness, with a focus on short-term metrics. Feedback on voter registration, volunteer engagement, and event attendance will be systematically collected, analyzed, and used to make real-time improvements during plan implementation.

Analysis of Collected Data:

- **Tools:** Utilize data analytics tools to process and analyze quantitative data collected through surveys, NSLVE reports, and other relevant sources.
- **Metrics:** Perform a comprehensive analysis of voter turnout data, Motivote engagement metrics, and any other quantitative data collected. Identify trends, patterns, and correlations that provide insights into the effectiveness of specific strategies and overall impact on campus democratic engagement.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** In addition to NSLVE data, the analysis will include short-term metrics collected from surveys and debriefs, focusing on the effectiveness of events in terms of voter registration, pledges, volunteers, and attendance.

Utilization of NSLVE for Assessment:

- **Tools:** Leverage the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) for in-depth analysis and benchmarking.
- **Metrics:** Compare NSLVE data with internal data to identify areas of alignment and divergence. Evaluate the demographic breakdown of student voter participation and analyze how it aligns with broader trends. Use NSLVE as a benchmark for setting realistic long-term goals and assessing the impact of the institution's democratic engagement efforts.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** While NSLVE provides valuable benchmarks, the evaluation will go beyond NSLVE data, incorporating short-term metrics related to event effectiveness for a more comprehensive understanding of impact.



Before, During, and After Implementation:

Pre-Implementation Assessment:

- **Objective:** Understand the baseline and prepare for targeted interventions.
- **Approach:** Conduct surveys and focus groups before the implementation of the action plan to gauge the initial level of awareness, identify potential barriers, and establish baseline data for key metrics.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Pre-implementation surveys will specifically focus on understanding the baseline for short-term metrics, including anticipated voter registration, pledges, volunteerism, and event attendance.

Mid-Implementation Evaluation:

- **Objective:** Assess ongoing progress and make necessary adjustments.
- **Approach:** Organize interim debrief sessions with stakeholders to gather real-time feedback. Utilize surveys to measure mid-term engagement levels and identify any emerging issues or opportunities. Adjust strategies as needed based on mid-implementation findings.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Mid-implementation evaluation will include analysis of short-term metrics, focusing on the effectiveness of ongoing events and initiatives.

Post-Implementation Analysis:

- **Objective:** Measure the overall impact and identify areas for refinement.
- **Approach:** Conduct comprehensive surveys and debriefs with key stakeholders after the completion of the action plan. Analyze NSLVE reports and compare them with pre-implementation data. Synthesize findings to create a detailed report highlighting achievements, challenges, and recommendations for future action plans.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Post-implementation analysis will include a detailed examination of short-term metrics related to event effectiveness, allowing for a thorough assessment of overall impact.

