



**SAINT LOUIS
UNIVERSITY™**
— EST. 1818 —

2024 Campus Action Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Saint Louis University (SLU) is located in St. Louis, Missouri, with a campus in Madrid, Spain. SLU's Campus Action Plan was developed by members of the Voter Engagement Committee, under the leadership of SLU's Center for Social Action staff. The Voter Engagement Committee has broad representation from the campus including staff, faculty, and students, with support from University administration. The current Action Plan builds on the successes of collaborative efforts created for the 2012, 2016, and 2020 Presidential elections, as well as the 2014, 2018, and 2022 Congressional Midterm elections. Through voter education efforts and opportunities to discuss ballot issues and relevant public policy, SLU works to promote the importance of local and state political engagement, as well as national issues and races during non-Presidential election seasons. The Action Plan focuses on a strategy that includes Voter Registration, Voter Education, Get out the Vote, and Ballot Access. Though much of the planning will focus on the voter turnout and activities leading up to the 2024 Presidential Election, there are civic education efforts that will continue into 2025 and beyond. The Action Plan will be implemented through individuals, university departments, and small groups of SLU students, faculty, and staff. SLU's 13,500+ students are from all 50 states, and each year students participate in up to 40 different study abroad programs. A key focus of voter education efforts includes absentee voting to ensure students are registered to vote and have access to their ballots regardless of where they are currently residing. Voting information materials and activities are also planned to reach students in all 12 residence halls and on-campus apartment buildings, as well as all 12 schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP

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Voter Engagement Committee

The Saint Louis University Voter Engagement Committee includes representatives from the following units:

Athletics
Busch Student Center
Campus Ministry
Campus Recreation and Wellness
Center for Social Action
Cross Cultural Center for Global Citizenship
Dean of Students Office
Government Relations, Office of the General Counsel
Housing and Residence Life
Parent and Family Engagement
Student Involvement Center
Department of Political Science
School of School Work
International Services
Student Government Association

As staff positions are filled in the spring, summer is a key time to onboard new members to the committee and to meet with university leaders to identify additional units to join in voter engagement efforts.

Additional University Partners who will help implement the Action Plan:

Marketing and Communications
Vice President for Diversity and Innovative Community Engagement
Vice President for Student Development
Office of the University President
Assistant Vice President for Communications
College of Arts and Sciences
School of Business
School of Science and Engineering

Local and National Community Partners:

Board of Election Commissioners, City of St. Louis
Election Commission, St. Louis County
League of Women Voters of Metro St. Louis
Missouri Voter Protection Coalition
National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)
NASPA and Fair Elections Center's Campus Vote Project, Voter Friendly Campus Designation

Civic Nation, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
National Voter Registration Day
Campus Compact
Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement
Interfaith America
Students Learn Students Vote Coalition
Student Vote Research Network
Every Vote Counts

Introduction

Saint Louis University has an active and diverse voter engagement committee with broad representation from the campus. The committee has been effective in sharing information and keeping a pulse on campus activities. Over the year, the Center for Social Action convenes meetings of smaller subgroups, particularly around voter registration drives, communications, local elections, the on-campus polling place, and voter education events. The chair will continue to communicate regularly to boost attendance at voter education events and recruit volunteers for voter registration, get-out-the-vote efforts, and polling place assistance. The committee will assess how to successfully promote voter registration, ballot access, and turnout, whether for students using their local Missouri or Illinois addresses to vote, or other states where many students vote absentee by mail.

COMMITMENT

In 2012, Saint Louis University convened an election task force. The group coordinated voter registration drives, debate watch events, speakers, an on-campus polling place, Get out the Vote activities, and an exhibit at the Saint Louis University Museum of Art. A webpage (<https://www.slu.edu/center-for-social-action/voter-info.php>) was created to assist students with voter registration as well as provide links to national voter registration resources, local election calendars and information, and polling place locations. The University continues to build on the successes of that 2012 task force, and under the leadership of the Center for Social Action, a new committee was formed to prepare for the 2016 and 2020 Presidential elections, local elections in 2017 and 2019, and the 2018 and 2022 Midterm elections.

In 2022, more than 20 events were held for the campus community, including presentations on many different social justice issues, understanding what was on the Missouri ballot, student activism, faith and politics, polling, and racial inequalities. This is an example of how the Voter Engagement Committee works to enhance integrated learning opportunities at SLU. During the 2020 Presidential Election season, University President, Dr. Fred Pestello was active in communicating voter registration information with our students through campus-wide emails as well as through his own social media. To increase turnout and civility, the President shared a message: "Our contributions to the common good can and do take many forms, but one of the most basic is voting...As colleges and universities across the country work to tackle some of society's most pressing challenges, including those presented by voting during a pandemic, we must recognize the need to inform our consciences, engage in dialogue, and participate in the democratic process." Since that time, President Pestello has signed the ALL IN Higher

Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation. The Vice President of Student Development and the President of the Student Government Association shared voter registration and get-out-the-vote messages with students in 2020 and 2022. The Voter Engagement Committee will continue to assist with these messaging efforts for the 2024 Presidential Election season.

Curricular Updates

SLU has adopted a new Core curriculum for undergraduate students which include new courses focused on voting and civic engagement.

Cura Personalis 1: Self in Community launches students on a path of self-discovery and deeper meaning-making by exploring fundamental questions of identity, history, and place. Completed in a student's first year at SLU, this course is designed to offer grounding and support as students join the SLU academic community and begin to navigate its distinctive intellectual and interpersonal challenges. This course situates students within the histories, places, and resources of SLU and St. Louis/Madrid, and assists them in their transition to college-level learning in the Jesuit tradition by inviting them to consider the diverse perspectives and backgrounds that make up SLU, including their own. The course also orients students to a variety of academic, health, wellness, civic, and cultural resources that are available to enrich their SLU journey. The module on civic education includes resources on voting and classroom presentations by SLU's Center for Social Action.

With the development of the new University Core Curriculum required of all students, a new class was developed to allow students to meet both their Cura Personalis 2: Self in Contemplation and Reflection in Action requirements. VITAS: Vocational Inquiry Through Advocacy and Service, connects students to a regular community service or advocacy opportunity, then prompts them to reflect on how their community engagement experiences are impacting their personal and professional growth, specifically what vocational pathways they might pursue. In an effort to connect their service and political advocacy efforts to the upcoming elections, voting information will be shared with each section of VITAS.

A new voting project will be developed with another new Core course, the Ignite Seminar for first-year students. One of the sections will develop a semester-long project on college student voting. If successful, the project will be scaled up and offered to additional sections of the Ignite Seminar as well as policy courses in Social Work, Public Health, and Political Science.

LANDSCAPE

Although a faith-based institution, SLU welcomes students, faculty and staff from all racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds and beliefs and creates a sense of community that facilitates their development as people for others. SLU promotes "faithful citizenship" and the civic obligation for all its members to be invested participants in our communities. This includes discernment of political matters and voting.

Beyond the landscape of the university, it is important to recognize the voting laws that have changed in states across the country, including Missouri. The time for this work in Missouri is critical because of a recent bill passed by the Missouri Legislature in 2022, H.B. 1878. The law added two weeks of no-excuse absentee voting, but only for voters able to cast ballots in person at the election authority, and only upon presentation of state-issued photo ID. The measure also eliminates early voting altogether if the photo ID provision is struck down. More than 200,000 Missouri voters, disproportionately voters of color, seniors, voters with disabilities, young voters, and low-wage workers do not currently have a non-expired State-issued ID. (The Missouri photo ID provision is still being contested in a court trial during the time of this submission.) The law makes it more difficult for college students to vote in Missouri.

According to the Missouri Voter Protection Coalition, the law also includes provisions allowing the Secretary of State to order removal of voters from the rolls at his discretion, outside the protections of federal list maintenance guidelines established by the National Voter Registration Act; opens the door to privately contracted election audits outside of audit best practices; and transfers power over voting law legal challenges from the executive branch to partisan lawmakers, among other provisions.

Voter Engagement

Voting is by no means the only indicator of civic or political engagement, but it is fundamental. Voting is central to democracy and governance of, by, and for the people. Accordingly, scholars and public officials have long used voting records to study and gauge the civic health of the country. SLU is committed to increasing voting rates and other political participation rates for local and state elections, as well as national elections in non-Presidential election years. The Voter Engagement Committee reviews data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). Overall student voter participation in 2012 was 51.8%; slightly above the mean of other similar institutions. The student voting rate was 61% during the 2016 Presidential election, and increased to 73.8% in 2020. Voter engagement work continued through classroom presentations, an increased number of voter registration events, and numerous speaking events. The Voter Engagement Committee is using voter turnout data to move forward with efforts for continued engagement and has set a goal of 75% for the SLU student voting rate for the 2024 Presidential Election. Relationships among several academic units and the Division of Student Development, Marketing and Communications, Office of the President, and the General Counsel were deepened through past voter education and voter registration efforts. The committee will continue to seek out partners for campus events and overall voter engagement.

GOALS

Long-term Goals

Over the next 5 years, Saint Louis University would like to increase student political engagement, and not only during the Presidential election season. Through voter education efforts and opportunities to discuss ballot issues and relevant public policy, SLU will continue to work to promote the importance of local and state political engagement, as well as national issues and races during non-Presidential election seasons.

Knowing that voter engagement efforts do not fall solely on student government, political parties, or political science faculty, SLU would like to increase the numbers of groups involved in voter registration and voter education efforts by 20%. The Voter Engagement Committee will continue to promote civic education and community engagement in the new Undergraduate Core Curriculum.

Short-term Goals for the 2024 Presidential Election Cycle

1. By reviewing data from the Student Vote Research Network, recent Voter Friendly Campus Reports, and sample Civic Action Plans, SLU would like to learn how other institutions successfully register students and increase their voter turnout to 75%.
2. Through on-campus voter registration drives and heightened communications, SLU would like to increase the percentage of students who are registered and then turn out to vote in upcoming elections.

STRATEGY

SLU student leaders are developing digital marketing materials and a social media campaign to promote online voter registration and voter turnout. There will be email messages sent to all SLU students on National Voter Registration Day with links to websites such as the Missouri online voter registration page through the Office of the Missouri Secretary of State. Students will also receive links to national websites and portals such as vote411.org and AllIntoVote.org that assist individuals to register to vote, check their registration status, and sign up for election reminders. We will request that the University President, the Vice President of Student Development, and the President of the Student Government Association help with campus-wide messaging. Students will also create short videos with instructions to help students register online. Through our work with the Student Vote Research Network, we have learned that sharing large national voting portals does not always result in successful, completed voter registrations. As much as possible, the voter registration volunteers and student leaders will guide students to access online voter registration through their own states' websites. We have learned from national scholars that one-on-one assistance is the most effective way to ensure students are indeed registered and able to vote on Election Day.

Students and staff participate in webinars, training sessions, and meetings to learn more about voter engagement best practices. From this, we have been able to develop new ideas that fit the culture of our campus. We have learned a lot about making voting fun. In the past, students were sometimes blamed and criticized for low turnout. In 2018, 2020, and 2022 students were able to share the importance of voting with their peers and help register other students, as well as answer helpful questions and build a new cohort of civically engaged students. The Center for Social Action will provide buttons and stickers to give out at events. There will also be items for students who volunteer at voter registration events. A recent SLU student leader served as the Communications and Operations Directors and then as National President of Every Vote Counts. Through these partnerships, we have been able to secure items to support voting activities on campus.

Voter Registration

To mobilize voter registration volunteers, we have recruited student leaders during the spring semester of 2024. They will coordinate with a diverse group of student organizations including the Black Student Alliance, OASIS (representing Caribbean, Latin American, and Hispanic students), Indian Student Association, Asian American Association, the Leadership for Social Change Learning Community, and the Diversity Leadership Cabinet of the Student Government Association. Students are very effective at connecting with and inspiring others to take action. There will be regular voter registration drives prior to the Missouri deadline to vote in the Presidential Election. Student and staff volunteers will staff tables set up in different areas of campus. There will be a table outside of the Center for Global Citizenship which will help in reaching a diversity of students, including first-generation Americans, students of color, and LGBTQ+ students. Voter registration tabling events are scheduled for Fall Welcome (which includes new student orientation), during a community engagement fair, a student involvement fair, National Voter Registration Day/Constitution Day, and during Homecoming and Family Weekend.

Since many states now allow online voter registration, we will use touchscreen devices for the voter registration tables. Missouri has online voter registration, but in order to be fully online, a touchscreen is required for the signature. SLU has been advised to promote online registration as much as possible. This reduces the amount of time and effort in Board of Elections' offices, and reduce key-entry errors due to illegible handwriting on the traditional paper registration forms.

SLU is a National Voter Registration Day partner. Student leaders and the Center for Social Action will plan campus activities to support the day. University Marketing and Communication and the Division of Student Development provide information on the voter registration process, including relevant deadlines.

Voter Education

The Voter Engagement Committee helps promote and sponsor campus events on elections and relevant policy issues. For example, in 2020, there were presentations on voter suppression, disinformation, racial inequities, health disparities, the role of faith, single issue voting, criminal justice reform, debate watch events, as well as Constitution Day trivia. Because Saint Louis University is a faith-based institution, the Center for Campus Ministry has provided copies of *An Ignatian Examen for Civic Life*, produced by the Ignatian Solidarity Network. The document, which is a call to be contemplatives in action, offers the opportunity for reflection and encourages readers to talk with God in specific ways about the interrelationship between Gospel values and political engagement.

Policy Pods

The Center for Social Action sponsors the Policy Pods Program. Each pod includes a group of five to seven students who meet once a week to prepare for legislative advocacy with elected officials. Students look at bills and research the impact, practice advocacy pitches, and then they meet with local legislators on specific issues. Policy Pods empower students to share their

voices, perspectives, and experiences. The pods have already been effective at developing a younger group of civic leaders. SLU will train additional leaders and expand this program with new policy topics. The Pod leaders are already planning to play a significant role in voter engagement efforts. In past years, Policy Pods held friendly competitions to see which Pod would assist the most students with registering to vote or checking their current voter registration.

Social Justice and Advocacy Series

Saint Louis University's Center for Social Action and the Cross Cultural Center for Global Citizenship sponsor the Social Justice and Advocacy Series. Each year, students in the program develop an understanding of social justice that is inclusive to both faith-based and civic-minded motivations, as well as the tools necessary to engage in advocacy around an issue of social justice. The Training is based on principles found in Catholic Social Teaching, a cornerstone in the Church's advocacy and solidarity initiatives. The purposes are to

- Educate students about the social and political processes that produce systems of inequality, injustice, and oppression within our own community and all over the world;
- Link community and civic involvements to broader national and international democratic participation efforts;
- Educate students about tools and skill sets that will assist them in addressing community conflicts, community organizing, and responding to social and political inequalities.

Ballot Access

For the Presidential and Midterm elections, Saint Louis University hosts an on-campus polling place, typically located in the Busch Student Center. Students who live on-campus and register using their campus address will be able to vote at SLU's Polling Place. The Center for Social Action staff and student leaders will assist students who are voting absentee with the out-of-state voting information that they need. In the fall, the Voter Engagement Committee will work to organize transportation to nearby polling places for students who live near campus and are registered to vote locally. Although polling places are only a few blocks away, having to walk can be a barrier for students trying to vote in between classes and who are relatively new to off-campus locations and the voting process in the City of St. Louis.

The Study Abroad Office will communicate with students who are studying outside of the United States during the fall 2024 semester. The communications will include information about voter registration and absentee voting. The messages have been drafted to stress the importance of creating a voting plan and to request ballots early.

SLU is a part of the Missouri Voter Protection Coalition which includes active involvement by the ACLU, League of Women Voters, Sierra Club, NAACP, and dozens of other large organizations. The Missouri Voter Protection Coalition is a nonpartisan statewide network working to protect the right to vote in Missouri by promoting ballot access and removing barriers to voting. The Coalition provides Election Protection Training, Get out the Vote materials, and updates to

legislation related to voting, as well as relevant litigation. The Missouri Voter Protection Coalition has been tracking 60 voter access bills in the State of Missouri and was successful in protecting the citizen initiative petition process.

Get Out the Vote

Students and staff from the Center for Social Action, Housing and Residence Life, University Marketing and Communications, and the Student Government Association will help raise awareness about state primaries and the November election through fliers and electronic signage in campus buildings as well as email, social media, and other internal communications. The Voter Engagement Committee will continue to work with local election officials to recruit students to be poll workers.

On Election Day, the phone number 866-OUR-VOTE will be shared with students in order to report problems. As in 2022, we will ask the President of the Student Government Association to send messages to the student body, reminding them of Election Day, how to find their polling place, what to bring, and where to find rides.

REPORTING

The Action Plan will be shared with University stakeholders, including staff from the Center Social Action, the Division of Student Development, and the Division of Diversity and Innovative Community Engagement. Members of the Voter Engagement Committee will be able to share the Action Plan with their stakeholders. The Action Plan will be also used with leaders of chartered student organizations and our student partners representing national organizations, including Campus Compact and Every Vote Counts. Data from NSLVE and the SLU Student Survey on Community Engagement will be shared with the Voter Registration Committee and University Leadership. As SLU's Center for Social Action website is updated during the summer of 2024, the Civic Action Plan will be shared on the voting and civic engagement webpage, <https://www.slu.edu/center-for-social-action/voter-info.php> SLU's 2022 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) Report will also be placed there when it is available.

EVALUATION

It is clear to the Voter Engagement Committee that there is always room for improvement in SLU's voter engagement efforts. Increases will likely be incremental over the next several election cycles. Each spring, the Center for Social Action administers the annual Student Survey on Community Engagement. The data is used for a variety of reasons including: 1. Ascertain the breadth and depth of students' service activities (e.g., how often are they engaging, how many hours spent); 2. Identify which of our community partners are students engaging with, and to what level; and 3. Measure the impact of community engagement on our students' development in areas such as diversity/equity/inclusion, vocational discernment, and overall civic involvement (e.g., voting, advocacy, social action). Reason number 3 was added to the survey after our initial Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement classification, and we have found a significant positive correlation between students' engagement in traditional community service and their political and advocacy activities. Chiefly, students who regularly engage in service are more

likely to also engage in other forms of democratic engagement, such as voting, contacting elected officials, and pursuing leadership opportunities within the community. Specifically, the survey includes a scale that measures political involvement. The scale distinguishes among different levels of involvement, from having political conversations, to simple actions, to deeper engagement. In 2020, 82% of registered students who completed the survey indicated that they were very likely to vote in the next election. 86% noted that they regularly discussed social and political issues with others, and 90% expressed that they regularly informed themselves about issues of social and political significance. These numbers will be compared to 2024 Presidential Election cycle data which will be collected in May, 2025.

A Student Vote Research Network Grant awarded to Saint Louis University members of the Voter Engagement Committee has provided resources to design a process to expand the number of voters among those groups least likely to vote: college students, low-income, and racial minorities. A primarily qualitative research project was developed to evaluate the success of engagement efforts and to better understand the voting barriers students face. Through focus group and survey findings, new communications to parents of SLU students are being created, as well as rides to nearby polling places, and increased expertise in absentee voting across the country.

SLU participates in the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) every three years, with the most recent administrations taking place in 2017, 2020, and 2023. In 2017 SLU chose to include the Civic Engagement module as part of the NSSE administration. The questions in this module asked students how often they had done various community engagement activities on a scale from never to very often. There were four items for which SLU seniors indicated statistically significantly higher participation than the peer group institutions: informed yourself about local or campus issues, discussed local or campus issues with others, discussed state, national, or global issues with others, and asked others to address local or campus issues.

As we continue to examine voting and other forms of civic engagement, we will continue to focus on students who immerse themselves in other community-based activities, such as service, service learning, and advocacy. Per the NSSE data, the number of students who take courses that include a community-based service-learning project has remained constant over the past several years, with 62% of first-year students and 72% of seniors indicating they had done so in 2017, and 61% of first-year students and 73% of seniors stating the same in 2020. However, this is an area in which SLU students participate much more than students in our comparison groups. In the 2020 results, SLU's first-year student participation in service-learning was 7% higher than the smaller Jesuit institution comparison group, 14% higher than the private research comparison group, and 17% higher than the similar and private comparison group.

The Student Survey on Community Engagement survey will again be administered in April-May, 2025 to reflect student political involvement during the Presidential election season. Survey findings will be shared with the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, the Division of Diversity and Innovative Community Engagement, and the University Board of Trustees. The Center for Social Action staff receives updates from the Center for Information and Research on

Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and reviews the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data. The Voter Engagement Committee will continue to examine these resources, instruments, and data points in order to increase democratic engagement on SLU's campus. We will continue to focus on voter registration, ballot access, and get out the vote efforts.

Revised Action Plan Submitted
May 31, 2024