

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Saint Louis University (SLU) Campus Action Plan is being 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 Action Plan builds on the successes of collaborative efforts created for the 2012, 2016, and 2020 Presidential elections, as well as the 2014 and 2018 Midterm elections. SLU would like to increase student political engagement, and not only during the Presidential and Midterm election seasons. Through voter education efforts and opportunities to discuss ballot issues and relevant public policy, SLU will work to promote the importance of local and state political engagement, as well as national issues and races during non-Presidential election seasons. Most of the work of the Action Plan will be implemented on campus during the 2020 fall semester. The Action Plan focuses on a strategy that includes Voter Registration, Voter Education, Get out the Vote, and Ballot Access. Saint Louis University will utilize the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement as well as political involvement indicators through the annual Student Survey on Service.

The SLU student voting rate was xx% during the 2020 Presidential election, up xx% from 2016. (NSLVE data in progress, due to a few inconsistencies. It will be fixed in the coming weeks.) For Midterm elections, student voter turnout increased from 18% in 2014 to 43.5% in 2018. Though much of the planning will focus on the voter turnout and activities leading up to the 2022 Midterm elections, there are civic education efforts that will continue into 2023 and beyond. The Action Plan will be implemented through individuals and small groups of students, faculty, and staff connected to the Voter Engagement Committee.

LEADERSHIP

Contact and Chair of the Voter Engagement Committee

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Voter Engagement Committee

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

Office of the Vice President for Student Development

Office of the Dean of Students

Busch Student Center

Department of Political Science

International Student Services

Student Government Association

Center for Social Action

Government Relations, Office of the General Counsel

Campus Ministry

Department of Housing and Residence Life

Student Involvement Center

Cross Cultural Center for Global Citizenship
Marketing and Communications
Campus Recreation and Wellness
Marketing and Communications

Others who will help implement the Action Plan:
Vice President for Diversity and 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 Social Work

Local and National Community Partners:
Board of Election Commissioners, City of St. Louis
Campus Compact
Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement
League of Women Voters of Metro St. Louis
National Voter Registration Day
Missouri Voter Protection Coalition
National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)
HeadCount
Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP)
NASPA and Fair Elections Center's Campus Vote Project, Voter Friendly Campus Designation
Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Introduction

Saint Louis University has an active and diverse voter engagement committee with broad representation from the campus. The committee has been effective at sharing information and keeping a pulse on campus activities. Over the year, the Center for Service and Community Engagement will convene meetings of smaller subgroups, particularly around voter registration drives, communications, local elections, 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 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 they may vote absentee.

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, 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 has been formed to prepare for the 2016 and 2020 Presidential elections, local elections in 2017 and 2019, and the 2018 Midterm elections.

During the 2020-2021 academic year election, more than 40 events were held for the campus community, including presentations on many different social issues, activism, faith and politics, voter suppression, disinformation, racial inequalities, and debate discussions. 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. Other members of the University administration, the Vice President of Student Development shared voter registration and Get-out-the Vote messages with students. The Voter Engagement Committee will continue to assist with these messaging efforts for the 2022 elections.

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 men and women 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.

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 54% during the 2016 Presidential election, up 3.9% from 2012. It was alarming to students that there was only an 18% student turnout rate during the 2014 Midterm elections, which was lower than our peer institutions. Voter engagement work continued through classroom presentations, an increased number of voter registration events, and numerous speaking events. The 43.5% student voter turnout rate for 2018 was encouraging. (We will update with 2020 data.)

Social Justice and Advocacy Series

Each year, the Center for Social Action, the Cross Cultural Center for Global Citizenship, and the Service Leadership Program in the School of Business sponsors the Social Justice and Advocacy Training. Through this series of workshops, approximately 25 students 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 in upon 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 skillsets that will assist them in addressing community conflicts, community organizing, and responding to social and political inequalities.

The Voter Engagement Committee is using voter turnout data to move forward with efforts for continued student engagement in the 2022 Midterm elections. 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 local events. 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 will continue to examine these resources, instruments, and data points in order to increase democratic engagement on SLU's campus.

GOALS

Long-term Goals

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, we 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 groups involved in voter registration and voter education efforts. The voter engagement committee will promote civic education and community engagement into the work of the

new University Undergraduate Core Committee.

Short-term Goals

1. Saint Louis University would like to learn how to successfully increase voter registration through intentionally working with residential, first-time workers as they move into their campus residence halls.
2. By reviewing resources such as recent Voter Friendly Campus Reports and sample Democratic Engagement Plans, SLU would like to learn how other institutions successfully register students and increase their voter turnout.
3. Through on-campus voter registration drives and heightened communications, Saint Louis University would like to increase the percentage of students who are registered and then turn out to vote.

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 a national site such as vote411.org that allows 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.

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 and 2020, 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 Change will provide buttons and stickers to give out at events. There will also be items for students who volunteer at voter registration events.

Voter Registration

To mobilize voter registration volunteers, we will recruit student leaders during the spring semester (2022). 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. The student organization Political Round Table has been extremely active in organizing voter registration drives on campus. There will be weekly voter registration drives prior to the Missouri deadline to vote in the Midterm elections. 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 LGBTQIA students.

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 will reduce 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.

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 will also play a role in voter engagement efforts.

Saint Louis University is in the process of updating and expanding its voting website, <https://www.slu.edu/center-for-social-action/voter-info.php>, which provides links to local and national voter registration resources, polling place information, election calendars, and voter identification information.

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.

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.

Get Out the Vote

Students and staff from the Center for Social Action, University Marketing and Communications, as well as the Student Government Association will help raise awareness about the August primaries and November election through fliers and electronic signage in campus buildings as well as email, social media, and other internal communications. The committee will continue to work with local election officials to recruit students to be poll workers. The Study Abroad Office will communicate with students who are studying abroad during the fall 2022 semester. The communications will include information about voter registration and absentee voting.

On Election Day, the phone number 866-OUR-VOTE will be shared with students in order to report problems. As in other years, we will ask the President, the Vice President of Student Development, and the President of the Student Government Association to send messages to the student body, reminding them of Election Day and 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 Office of Diversity and 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 the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP). Data from NSLVE and the SLU Student Survey on Service (see below) will be shared with the

Voter Registration Committee and University Leadership.

EVALUATION

Saint Louis University recognizes that the student voting rate was 54% during the 2016 Presidential election, up 3.9% from 2012. The University set a goal of 56% for the 2020 Presidential election. (We will discover the rate soon.) It is clear to the Voter Engagement Committee that there is room for improvement, but increases will likely be incremental over the next several election cycles. The Center for Social Action administers the annual Student Survey on Service to all students toward the end of the spring semester. 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. The survey was administered in April 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. The survey will be administered in April 2023 to reflect student political involvement during the Midterm election season. Survey findings will be included in the Center for Social Action annual reports, distributed to the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, the Office of Diversity and Innovative Community Engagement, and the University Board of Trustees.

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