



**Salem State University**  
**All-In Campus Democracy Challenge**

**Your Voice, Your Vote: Election 2020**  
**Voter Engagement Action Plan**

*Salem State University's Your Voice, Your Vote: Election 2020 programming is sponsored by the Center for Civic Engagement and the Frederick E. Berry Institute of Politics and Civic Engagement and is supported by departments, programs, and student organizations throughout the university.*



## Introduction

The Center for Civic Engagement is the nexus for community-based initiatives, civic learning, and public engagement at Salem State University. To promote equitable and sustainable community relationships, and to reflect our institutional values of equity, partnership, and collaboration, the CCE is responsible for developing and supporting programs that connect our students, faculty, staff, and alumni to the greater community. Through these collaborations designed to address public issues and enhance academic learning, the CCE promotes the importance of community involvement and the privileges and responsibilities inherent in civic participation. To accomplish this the CCE focuses on four main areas: *advocacy, civic learning, community, and political engagement.*

The Frederick E. Berry Institute of Politics and Civic Engagement at Salem State University aims to engage and inspire a diverse community of learners to pursue careers in political and public service while also convening public and private sector leaders to discuss and move forward issues of significance to Massachusetts.

## Your Voice, Your Vote: Election 2020 Steering Committee

Cynthia Lynch, Executive Director, Center for Civic Engagement  
and Frederick E. Berry Institute of Politics and Civic Engagement

Kate Adams, Assistant Director, Center for Civic Engagement

Sara Moore, Assistant Professor, Sociology and Faculty Fellow, Center for Civic Engagement

Jennifer Jackman, Professor, Political Science

Dan Mulcare, Professor, Political Science

Adria Duijvesteijn, Senior Director, External Affairs

Nicole Giambusso, Director, Public Relations

Connor Holland, MASSPIRG Coordinator

Shelby Herring, Graduate Retention Fellow, Center for Civic Engagement

Billy Scanlan, Undergraduate Senior Staff, Center for Civic Engagement and Newman Scholar

Richie Cadet, Undergraduate and Salem State Student Trustee

Michael Corley, Undergraduate and President of College Republicans

Hannah Levine, Undergraduate and Salem State Civic Fellow

Toiell Washington, Undergraduate and Resident Assistant, Social Justice Learning Community

Joey Wolongevicz, Undergraduate and Lead Coordinator, Sunrise Movement

In addition to the Election 2020 Committee, the following areas will be active partners in SSU's voter engagement efforts: First Year Experience Office, Residence Life, LEAD (i.e. student life), Inclusive Excellence, Bates Center for Public and Global Affairs, Florence Luscomb Women's Center, and the Political Science Department along with additional departments throughout the university.

## **Voter Engagement Efforts to Date**

Salem State University participates in the Tufts University National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), which measures voter registration and participation rates at over 1,000 colleges nationwide. During the 2016 election, the registration rate of eligible students increased by 5 percentage points to 84.8% from the 2012 election. The student voting rate increased by 6.3 percentage points to 65.2%, 30% higher than the national average of 50.4%. This achievement earned SSU a Silver Seal of Excellence from the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge. 2016 strengths included a 9.3% increase in voter engagement of 18-21-year-old students and an 11.2% increase in voter engagement of men.

For Election 2018, the CCE provided more than 15 programs, registered more than 900 voters, and saw 600 students vote on campus. This effort resulted in an increased registration rate of eligible students by 5.4 percentage points to 80.6% from the 2014 election, and the voting rate almost doubled from 25.1% to 46.8%, 20% higher than the national average of 39.1%. This achievement earned a Gold Seal of Excellence from the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge and Salem State was named in *Washington Monthly's* 2018 America's Best Colleges for Student Voting. The 2018 NSLVE report provided SSU with departmental voter engagement rates with the highest being Public Administration and Social Service; Social Sciences; and Education. The lowest was Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies; Liberal Arts and Sciences and Humanities; and Computer and Information Sciences.

## **Your Voice, Your Vote: Election 2020 Voter Engagement Plan**

Context: The global emergence of COVID-19 poses a challenge to our voter engagement planning and makes democratic participation and a robust civic education more crucial than ever. As of this writing, Salem State is closed to students and faculty and the leadership team is developing fall plans that will likely include a hybrid model of course offerings and engagement opportunities. As a result, we have broadened our 2020 steering committee to include more students in order to increase voter outreach to the larger student body. We have also included a combination of in-person and virtual opportunities within this action plan.

### Goals:

1. Engage more and diverse groups in voter mobilization efforts; these will include student clubs and organizations, departments, faculty, and staff.
2. Develop and implement an accessible online voter registration system to better reach students.
3. Modify in-person Your Voice, Your Vote programming to prepare for virtual Election 2020 engagement.
4. Develop an Election 2020 virtual teach-in that includes at least 50 individual classes.
5. Increase our registration of eligible student voters to 90%.
6. Increase our student voter engagement rate to 70% of all eligible voters.

### Voter Registration/Voter Access:

Voter registration and voter access are critically important during Election 2020, especially with the unknowns associated with COVID-19 and the ongoing national discussion on voting procedures.

We are currently working with our IT department to create an internal online voter registration process on Salem State's student management portal, Navigate. We hope to register students who can vote on campus if they live in the residence halls or vote at their home address/polling place if they are not on campus for the Fall 2020 semester. Salem State has worked with the City of Salem to establish a polling site on campus, so it is important that students correctly register using the appropriate address. With the predicted hybrid model of face-to-face and online education, we want to ensure that students understand the differences between mail-in voting and in-person voting, the deadlines associated with postmarking a ballot, and how to track their ballot online.

We are planning several opportunities for students to register to vote online:

- While there will be fewer in-person events, the ones we plan will include individual voter registration consultations.
- Working alongside MASSPIRG, we will hold a safe dorm storm to remind students of voter registration deadlines and details.
- We will collaborate with student clubs and organizations to encourage their constituent students to register to vote.
- Using 2018 NSLVE departmental data, we will encourage departments to reach out to their students and set individual goals to increase their student's registration and engagement. We will offer prizes and recognition to departments that increase their registration and voter engagement rates.
- Our expanded Election 2020 steering committee will reach out to their circles of influence to promote voter registration.
- We will endeavor to reach all first-year students through classroom visits (face-to-face or virtual) in First Year Experience courses. We will also encourage faculty to include voter registration details in their syllabi.
- We will regularly send emails to students reminding them to register to vote and how they can register to vote on campus. We will accompany this with similar social media posts.
- Students participating in the First Year Day of Service will be able to register to vote on campus at some point during that day.

### Voter Education:

Salem State's election programming is designed to educate our students on voting; the election process; and the local, state, and national issues being debated on the campaign trail. We are currently developing the Fall 2020 election program to include scaled down in-person events and a robust offering of virtual election workshops, debate watch parties, and guest speakers via webinars for individual classes and the community at large. While we will hold events throughout the two months preceding the election, we plan to highlight Constitution Day, National Voter Registration Day, Early Voting, and all the ballot questions.

We plan to organize a faculty led teach-in to educate students about the voting process as well as ballot questions and candidates running for office. We will also answer student questions about the ballot or voting on campus. We aim to have faculty devote one class period to Election 2020 and the CCE will provide resources and support as needed.

### Voter Mobilization:

After registering students to vote and providing diverse programming to help inform their voting decisions, the final step of our Your Voice, Your Vote: Election 2020 programming is to make sure students mail in their ballots by the appropriate deadline or get to the polls on Election Day. Below are some of the voter mobilization efforts we plan to use:

- Flyers and posters.
- Social media campaigns.
- The Navigate platform, which will generate emails to students reminding them of Election Day details.
- Election Day countdown + canvassing. In the week leading up to and on Election Day, students will canvass the entire campus reminding students to vote. We will also develop a virtual version of this process.
- Get out the Vote Design-a-thon and Hack the Vote. Originating with our 2016 programming, students will come together to collaborate, create, and hack to encourage everyone to vote. They will create a poster, drawing, painting, poem, app, platform, or social media statement to share with the SSU community and beyond. We will share their creative efforts through social media and a public exhibition.
- Voting plan tabling. We will train CCE student staff and volunteers to table in the weeks and days leading up to the election in high-traffic areas, with the goal of asking passersby about their "voting plan" (i.e. if they're registered, where they're registered, when the election is, what their ballot looks like, and when/how they will go to the polls).
- Salem State will work to become an early voting site as it did in 2018 and all mobilization efforts planned for Election Day will also be utilized for early voting.

### Voter Engagement Assessment:

- Salem State is participating in the Tufts National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) study and will receive a detailed report on how many of our students are registered to vote and how many voted in the 2020 Election. We also plan to assess voter engagement in different departments.
- We are developing tools to assess several Your Voice, Your Vote programs. Along with the results of the NSLVE study, these will be used to measure the impact and success of our efforts.