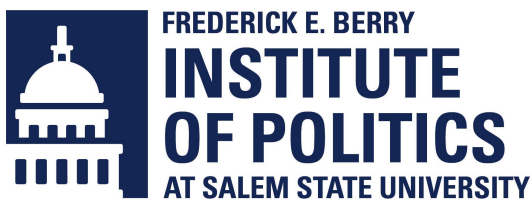




**Salem State University**

**Democratic Engagement  
Action Plan  
2022**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Salem State University, established in 1854, is a comprehensive master's-level public institution in Salem, Massachusetts. Civic engagement is at the heart of the university's mission as it "prepares a diverse community of learners to contribute responsibly and creatively to a global society." In 2020, Salem State University received Carnegie Community Engagement Classification which reflects the exceptional energy that has gone toward making civic and community engagement a fundamental part of the Salem State experience and identity. In fact, Salem State University is considered the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's Civic Engagement State University.

The Frederick E. Berry Institute of Politics (Berry IOP) contributes to this identity through its mission to engage and inspire our Salem State community to take an active role in our democracy and to pursue careers in politics and public service. The Berry IOP leads Vikings Vote, an university-wide initiative to collaboratively work towards Salem State University's commitment to 100% student voter participation through equitable, intentional, and nonpartisan initiatives that promote voter registration, education, and turnout. Vikings Vote consists of student Vote Ambassadors and a university-wide Vote Coalition.

This action plan was developed by Samantha Giffen, Assistant Director of the Berry IOP with input from the Vote Ambassadors and the Vote Coalition. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2022 election, 2024 election, and beyond. This plan recognizes the leaders involved in this work, reflects on our commitment to civic engagement, analyzes our student voting landscape, establishes goals and strategies, and develops an assessment of these efforts.

Salem State University's Goals for the 2022 Election:

1. Increase voter registration rates from 80% in 2018 to 85% in 2022.
2. Increase voter turnout rates from 45% in 2018 to 60% in 2022.
3. Increase voter turnout rates for first year students from 30% in 2018 to 40% in 2022.
4. Increase voter turnout rates for all racially minoritized identities to 40% in 2022.
5. Build campus-wide partnerships and establish a campus-wide Vikings Vote Coalition.

We will implement this plan and pursue these goals by utilizing strategies proven effective both on campus and nationally. We will implement the Ask Every Student model of partnering with campus departments and student leaders to intentionally integrate voter engagement into existing processes and programs to equally reach every student. Based on research from the CIRCLE Growing Voters report, we will also be utilizing various exposure and support strategies to ensure all students are aware of the election and have access to get registered and ready to vote.

## LEADERSHIP

The Frederick E. Berry Institute of Politics (Berry IOP) at Salem State University leads the institution's work to increase democratic engagement. There are multiple groups that the Berry IOP works with to do this work successfully including the Vikings Vote Ambassadors, the Vikings Vote Coalition, and other partnerships.

### Vikings Vote Ambassadors

Student leaders who are hired by the Berry IOP to support peers through their voting process by hosting events, tabling, visiting classes, one-on-one outreach, and more. Each vote ambassador works intentionally with specific campus partners or communities to collaboratively integrate voter engagement across campus. Vote ambassadors represent a diversity of majors, identities, and campus leadership roles which contribute to the impact of their work. This paid position and their initiatives are made possible through an Ask Every Student Implementation Grant. The hiring, training, and supervision of these ambassadors is led by the Berry IOP.

**Jupiter Bassett** | Classes Coordinator + LGBTQ Coordinator

**Christine Belitsky** | Center for Academic Excellence Coordinator

**Cynthia Boyd** | Residence Life Coordinator

**Gamael Chalvire** | BIPOC Coordinator

**Michael Corley** | Major Events Coordinator

**Camila Diaz** | Social Media Coordinator

**Kaitlyn Evans** | First Year Coordinator

**Briana Herrera** | Tabling Coordinator

**Nora McQuade** | Student Organizations Coordinator

**Joshua Miller** | Athletics Coordinator

### Vikings Vote Coalition

Campus-wide coalition established in August 2022. The mission is to collaboratively work towards Salem State University's commitment to 100% student voter participation through equitable, intentional, and nonpartisan initiatives that promote voter registration, education, and turnout. This is led by the Berry IOP and chaired by Samantha Giffen.

**Samantha Giffen** | Assistant Director, Berry Institute of Politics

**Lucy Corchado** | Staff Assistant, Center for Justice and Liberation

**Joy Schmelzer** | Director, Residence Life

**Travis Fleming** | Associate Director, Residence Life

**Bri Sirota** | Assistant Director, First Year Experience

**Theresa Giard** | Assistant Director, Campus Life and Recreation

**Meg Foley** | Assistant Director, Athletics

**Nicole Giambusso** | Director, Public Relations

**Mike Mitchell** | Associate Director, Alumni Relations

**Adria Duijvesteijn** | Senior Director of External Affairs and Strategic Initiatives

**Daniel Mulcare** | Chairperson, Department of Politics, Policy, and International Relations

**Megan Murphy** | Assistant Professor, Education + Civic Engagement Faculty Fellow  
**Michael Corley** | President, Student Government Association  
**Nora McQuade** | Vice President, Student Government Association  
**Robert Huttig** | Chairperson, Civic Engagement Committee, Student Government  
**Erika Pen** | President, Asian American Student Association  
**Sierra Dearnis** | President, Salem State's Chapter of MASSPIRG Students  
**Brooklyn Darling** | Campus Organizer, MASSPIRG Students

### Other Partnerships

These are internal and external partners who we consistently collaborate with to host events, use resources, and share messages.

Academic Affairs and Faculty  
ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge  
Ask Every Student  
Campus Takeover  
North Shore Community Development Coalition  
League of Women Voters - Salem  
Salem City Clerk  
Student Organizations  
Students Learn, Students Vote Coalition  
Student PIRGs

## **COMMITMENT**

One of the hallmarks of the Salem State University experience is our commitment to civic engagement. In fact, Salem State is considered the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's Civic Engagement State University. This identity was established because civic engagement is embedded across our university including in our strategic plan, communication, curriculum, and co-curriculum.

### Strategic Plan

- Current Mission Statement: "Provide a high quality, student-centered education that prepares a diverse community of learners to *contribute responsibly and creatively to a global society*, and serve as a resource to advance the region's cultural, social and economic development."
- Core Values include Civic Engagement.
- Salem State is currently developing a new strategic plan for 2023-2028 which will expand the commitment to civic engagement.
  - Proposed Goal: Civic Engagement and Public Good
  - "Cultivate a civically engaged community of learners and scholars committed to public problem solving in a diverse democracy, and align curriculum, co-curriculum, research, and creative activity with opportunities to promote the public good."

### Communication

- President mentions civic engagement in most external and internal speeches.
- Informational email is sent to the campus community ahead of every election.
- Text message reminders are sent to every student before the voter registration deadline and election day.
- Designated campus website with voting resources: [saalemstate.edu/vikingsvote](https://saalemstate.edu/vikingsvote)
- Most press releases and advisories sent from our Public Relations team highlights our commitment to civic engagement.

### Curriculum

- Civic Engagement Minor – interdisciplinary 15-credit minor that provides students with the opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and experiences to become informed and effective participants in civic and democratic life.
- Community Engaged Courses – classes include community engaged components that prepare students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to address the social, political, economic, and environmental issues facing our communities. 563 Community Engaged Courses held in 2021-22.
- Public Problem Solving in Your Major – faculty in each department identified the most common public problems studied within their discipline and integrate ways for students to address them through courses.
- Critically Engaged Civic Learning – we use the phrase critically-engaged civic learning (CECL) as an updated revision for the term "service-learning." CECL is an equity-based framework that views all constituent stakeholders (community members, community organizations, students, and educational institutions) as invested partners in the co-design, implementation, and evaluation of CECL initiatives. This framework was developed by faculty and administrators at Salem State.

### Co-Curriculum

- Civic Engagement Fellowship – cohort of students who engage in leadership workshops, volunteer opportunities, reflection activities, and design and implement a community action project in order to help them develop their civic identity and understand the role they play in making change.
- Community Service – Annual First Year Day of Service, monthly Service Saturday programs, and all student organizations are required to do a community service project.
- Civic Engagement Hall of Fame – annual program sponsored by the President and the Center for Civic Engagement that recognizes students, staff, faculty, and alumni for their efforts in addressing social and environmental challenges facing communities.
- Civic Dinners Series – this series gives students the opportunity to build community, network with, and learn from local advocates, community leaders, and their peers on important social issues over a catered meal.
- Various other programs hosted by the Center for Civic Engagement, Berry IOP, Center for Justice & Liberation, Center for Creative and Performing Arts, Residence Life, Academic Departments, and more.

### Recognition for Commitment

- Earned Carnegie Community Engagement Classification in 2020.
- The Massachusetts State Legislature appropriated \$200,000 for three consecutive years to establish and maintain the Berry Institute of Politics at Salem State University.
- Received four grants over the last three years to develop practices and professional development that is at the intersection of civic engagement and equity.
- Signatory to the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge's Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2020.
- Listed as one of the Best Colleges for Student Voting according to *Washington Monthly*.
- Undergraduate student Michael Corley was recognized on ALL IN's 2022 Inaugural Student Voting Honor Roll.
- Graduate student Samantha Giffen was recognized with NASPA's Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement Knowledge Community's 2022 Rising Star for Commitment to Civic Engagement Award.
- Significant number of alumni serve as elected officials and/or work in the political and public sectors.

## **LANDSCAPE**

Salem State University is the most diverse and second largest state university in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We recognize and appreciate the diversity of students' lived experiences, values, and identities. We utilized the following enrollment data, past NSLVE reports, and current voting resources/access to intentionally and equitably inform our plans to increase democratic engagement.

### Enrollment Demographics (Fall 2021)

Data from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#)

- 7,131 total students – 5,555 undergraduate and 1,576 graduate
- Business, Healthcare, and Psychology have the highest enrollment
- 92% in-state students, 7% out-of-state students, 1% international students
- 83% under the age of 24
- 40% Pell Grant recipients
- 22% on-campus residents
- Race/Ethnicity:
  - 57% White
  - 21% Hispanic/Latinx
  - 9% Black
  - 4% Asian
  - 3% Two or more races

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Salem State University has been recognized by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge with the following seals: 2016 Silver, 2018 Gold, 2020 Silver.

Table 1: Total Voter Registration & Voting Rates

	Voter Registration Rates		Voting Rates	
	Salem State	National	Salem State	National
2016	84%	76%	64%	52%
2018	80%	73%	45%	39%
2020	87%	83%	68%	66%

Analysis: Voter registration and voting rates are consistently above the national average. However, within Salem State, there is a large gap in the number of registered students versus the number of students who are actually voting. This indicates that more needs to be done focused on turnout efforts.

Table 2: Voting by Education Level

	First Year	Second Year	Upper Level	Graduate
2016	53%	57%	62%	75%
2018	30%	35%	45%	65%
2020	57%	61%	68%	79%

Analysis: Voting rates increase as education level increases. This may demonstrate that students increasingly understand the importance of and process of voting throughout their time at Salem State. However, this also indicates that more needs to be done to intentionally support first year students.

Table 3: Voting by Race/Ethnicity

	Asian 4% of student body	Black 9% of student body	Hispanic 21% of student body	Multiracial 3% of student body	White 57% of student body
2016	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2018	30%	34%	41%	40%	49%
2020	50%	57%	60%	70%	73%

Analysis: Salem State is a Primarily White Institution (PWI) and an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Voting rates for all races are consistently above the national average. However, the voting rates for racially minoritized students are still consistently behind the voting rate for White students. This indicates that more needs to be done to intentionally support racially minoritized students.

Table 4: Voting by Field of Study in 2018

Highest Voting Rates		Lowest Voting Rates	
Field of Study	National	Salem State	National
Social Work	62%	Sport & Movement Science	27%
English	60%	Business	35%
History	59%	Computer Science	35%

Analysis: STEM majors have historically had the lowest turnout at Salem State and nationally. Business is the largest major at Salem State and further research needs to be done to identify why they have one of the lowest turnouts. Despite increases among all majors from 2018 to 2020, this data indicates that more needs to be done to intentionally support students studying Business and STEM. STEM majors are typically small so intentional voter engagement can have a major impact.

#### Voting Resources/Access

- Polling location on campus for resident students who register with their campus address.
- Designated office in charge of voter engagement initiatives.
- Institutional and grant funds to hire student vote ambassadors and pay for programming and print materials.
- Designated campus website with voting resources: [salemstate.edu/vikingsvote](http://salemstate.edu/vikingsvote)
- Informational email is sent to the campus community ahead of every election.
- The Berry IOP and MASSPIRG lead voter registration efforts through tables and class visits.
- Very supportive President who previously served as a State Representative.
- Since 92% of students are from in-state, our voting resources and information can be fairly specific to Massachusetts.
- In Massachusetts, only first time voters may be asked for identification. College IDs are not accepted, however the laws are pretty flexible allowing a piece of mail to be valid ID.
- In Massachusetts, there are three options for voting including no-excuse early voting by mail, early voting in person for 2 weeks, and voting in person on election day.
- In Massachusetts, there is no election day voter registration so many students are unable to vote if they miss the deadline which is 10 days before election day.

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

These goals were developed collaboratively by the Vikings Vote Ambassadors and the Vikings Vote Coalition utilizing ideas from previous years, other institutions, and national resources like the Ask Every Student Toolkit. Short term goals were established for the 2022 election utilizing data from the last Midterm Election in 2018. Long term goals were established for the 2024 election utilizing data from the last Presidential Election in 2020.



## Election 2022

### **1. Increase voter registration rates from 80% in 2018 to 85% in 2022.**

- Vote Ambassadors help 450 students register to vote through events, tables, class visits, announcements at student organization meetings, and more.
- Host inaugural Vikings Voterpalooza event to celebrate National Voter Registration Day.
- Visit 50 classes to talk about voting and help students register to vote.
- Host at least one table every week at different times and campus locations.
- Host at least one table in every residence hall on campus.
- Host tables at Convocation, Student Involvement Fair, and other major events.
- Visit Resident Advisor training and student organization meetings to talk about voting and help students register to vote.
- Text message reminder sent to all students one week before the deadline with a link to our informational website.
- Step-by-step guide for how to register online is on our website.
- Post large 24x36 posters in every building on campus with the steps and resources to register, learn what's on the ballot, and make a plan to vote.

### **2. Increase voter turnout rates from 45% in 2018 to 60% in 2022.**

- Help educate students about the candidates by hosting two candidate forums, developing a nonpartisan handout, and posting guides to social media.
- Help educate students about the statewide ballot questions by hosting one panel event, developing a nonpartisan handout, and posting a guide to social media.
- Utilize texting to connect with all first year students and help them make a plan to vote.
- Send Email to all students one week before Election Day with reminders, voting options, and relevant links.
- Text message reminder sent to all students one day before Election Day with a link to our informational website.
- Takeover of Salem State University's Instagram reaching up to 10,000 people.
- Host inaugural Party at the Polls featuring music, food, red carpet, and photobooth.
- Posters all over campus advertising Election Day with a QR code to our website.
- Campus Partners all post a graphic to social media on election day with a reminder that its election day and resources for how to vote.
- Post videos to social media of student leaders sharing why they vote.

### **3. Increase voter turnout rates for first year students from 30% in 2018 to 40% in 2022.**

- Assign one Vote Ambassador to work intentionally with the First Year Experience office and First Year Seminar faculty to support first year students with voting.
- Meet with leadership from the First Year Experience office to build partnership.
- Visit at least half (20) of the First Year Seminars to talk about voting and help students register to vote.
- Host one collaborative event with the First Year Experience Office to do voter registration, talk about what's on the ballot, and make plans to vote.
- Added voting resources to the First Year Experience Canvas course.

#### **4. Increase voter turnout rates for all racially minoritized identities to 40% in 2022.**

- Assign one Vote Ambassador to work intentionally with the BIPOC identity based student organizations and the Center for Justice & Liberation (Multicultural Office) to support racially minoritized students with voting.
- Visit all seven BIPOC student organization meetings to talk about voting and help members register to vote.
- Host one collaborative event with all BIPOC student organizations to do voter registration, talk about what's on the ballot, and make plans to vote.
- Host one event during Latinx, Hispanic Heritage Month featuring community and student leaders talking about the power of voting and political engagement.

#### **5. Build campus-wide partnerships and establish a campus-wide Vikings Vote Coalition.**

- Meet one-on-one with other departments across campus for introductions, sharing context about voting, and discussing opportunities for partnership.
  - Academic Affairs, Alumni Relations, Athletics, Campus Life & Recreation, Center for Academic Excellence, Center for Justice & Liberation, First Year Experience, Public Relations, Residence Life, Staff Advisors for Identity Based Student Organizations
- Identify and invite faculty, staff, and students to join the coalition.
- Host coalition meetings once a month to establish mission, goals, and discuss strategies.
- Assign each Vote Ambassador to work intentionally with specific campus partners or communities to collaboratively integrate voter engagement across campus. See Leadership section for a full list.

#### Election 2024 and Beyond

1. Increase voter registration rates from 87% in 2020 to 90% in 2024.
2. Increase voter turnout rates from 68% in 2020 to 75% in 2024.
3. Work towards a voting rate of at least 50% for all racial identities.
4. Work towards a voting rate of at least 50% for all education levels.
5. Work towards a voting rate of at least 50% for all fields of study.
6. Maintain the Vikings Vote Coalition with equal representation from faculty, staff, students, city election office, and community partners.
7. Add Election Day into the academic calendar as a university recognized holiday so classes won't be held (Democracy Day).
8. Offer voting resources in multiple languages, especially Spanish since we are an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).
9. Establish a required Civic Engagement course that teaches the foundations of democratic engagement and political processes.

# EVALUATION

We value reflection and evaluation within all of our work as we are continuously aiming to improve what we do and how we do it. Below are the ways we will evaluate this action plan and democratic engagement overall.

## NSLVE Report

We will be utilizing the data from the NSLVE Report similar to how we did within this action plan. We will review the data, analyze what it means for our campus, have discussions about it with relevant campus members, and use it to inform our future plans.

## Pre-Election Quick Poll

Open: October 11 - October 14

Salem State University utilizes an application called Navigate that students use to view their class schedule, set up appointments with advisors and offices, to-do lists, and more. Since students utilize this application so often we partnered with Retention Services to conduct a "Quick Poll." This is a 3 question survey that students are prompted to participate in upon opening the app and via email notification. Below are the questions that will be asked. We will use this information to follow up with student participants with personalized support via email based on their responses. This allows us to understand student voter engagement early enough in the semester so we can support students effectively.

### *Voter Eligibility:*

1. Please select the statement that best describes your eligibility to register to vote in the United States Midterm Election on November 8, 2022.
  - a. I am eligible to register to vote
  - b. I am not eligible to register to vote
  - c. I am unsure if I am eligible to register to vote

### *Intent to Register to Vote:*

2. Please select the statement that best describes your intent to register to vote in the United States Midterm Election on November 8, 2022.
  - a. I am already registered to vote
  - b. I intend to register to vote
  - c. I do not intend to register to vote
  - d. I am unsure if I intend to register to vote

### *Intent to Vote in 2022 Midterm Election:*

3. Please select the statement that best describes your intent to vote in the United States Midterm Election on November 8, 2022.
  - a. YES – I will Vote
  - b. NO – I will NOT Vote
    - Branching: (Optional) Please share why you do not intend to Vote
  - c. MAYBE – I am unsure if I will Vote
    - Branching: (Optional) Please share why you are unsure if you will Vote

## Post-Election Survey

Open: November 14 - November 18

The Vikings Vote Coalition, with input from the Vote Ambassadors, will develop a survey that will hopefully be sent to all students at Salem State University. The purpose of this survey is to learn more about students' experience with voter engagement this fall so we can collect data that will inform our work in the future. We plan to use this data when planning for future strategies, but also to work towards some of the coalition goals before the 2024 election. We will be collecting some basic demographic information in this survey so we can do a deeper analysis of the results. Below is a draft of the assessment questions that will be asked.

1. Did you know there was an election this fall?
  - a. Yes or No
  - b. If **yes**, how did you hear about it? (check all that apply)
    - i. Table on campus
    - ii. Someone came to my class
    - iii. Faculty/Staff
    - iv. Student Leader (RA, SGA, etc.)
    - v. Email
    - vi. Text message
    - vii. Social media
    - viii. Flyer
    - ix. News
    - x. Friend / Family
    - xi. Other
  - c. If **no**, what would have been the best way to inform you of the election?
    - i. Open Response
  
2. Did you vote?
  - a. Yes or No
  - b. If **yes**:
    - i. How did you vote?
      1. By Mail, Early, On Election Day
    - ii. Where did you vote?
      1. On Campus, Off Campus Apartment, Permanent Address, Out of State
    - iii. Why did you vote?
      1. Open Response
  - c. If **no**:
    - i. Why did you not vote? (check all that apply)
      1. Didn't know there was an election
      2. Didn't know what we were voting on
      3. Didn't know where to vote
      4. Didn't know how to vote
      5. Didn't registered to vote before the deadline

6. Too busy on Election Day
7. Live Out of State
8. Not interested in what we were voting for
9. Did not want to vote
10. Other

3. How engaged were you in this election? (Check all that apply)

- a. I voted
- b. I posted on social media
- c. I attended a relevant event
- d. I helped people register to vote
- e. I helped a campaign
- f. I worked at the polls
- g. I did a class project related to it
- h. I reminded friends and family about the election
- i. I did not vote and was not engaged in the election
- j. Other

Other potential questions:

- How educated were you about the candidates running? (scale 1-5)
- How educated were you about the ballot questions? (scale 1-5)
- What are some barriers that you think prevent students from voting?
- What other resources or ideas would you like to see?
- Are you interested in helping Vikings Vote in future elections?
  - Collect Contact information

## REPORTING

### Internally

This action plan and our NSLVE report will be shared with all of the Vikings Vote Ambassadors, Vikings Vote Coalition members, and upper level administration at Salem State University. We will also be sharing the data regarding voting rates by field of study with faculty department chairs and encourage them to share this data within their department.

### Externally

Historically we have only shared the overall voting rate publicly on our website and in speeches, while our action plans and the full NLSVE reports are only shared internally. However, starting with our 2020 NSLVE report and this 2022 Action Plan, we will be sharing them online for public viewing on the Vikings Vote website. Some NSLVE data and components of this action plan will also be shared on social media and in campus presentations.

Our campus action plan and NSLVE reports will be also posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website: <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/salem-state-university>.