

SEWANEE

The University
of the South

Office of
Civic Engagement

ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge 2022 Action Plan Sewanee: The University of the South

Prepared by:

Morgan Jennings

mhiennin@sewanee.edu | 931.598.3201

Coordinator of Student Programs

Program Manager, Democratic Engagement & Yea, Sewanee Votes!

Office of Civic Engagement

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

This action plan was developed in Fall 2022 by the Office of Civic Engagement's Yea, Sewanee Votes! (YSV!) program to communicate our strategy for engaging voters at Sewanee: The University of the South. The plans outlined here will be carried out over the 2022-2024 academic years on Sewanee's campus. This plan will be implemented by members of the Sewanee campus community recruited by YSV! in an effort to increase voter engagement and further institutionalize The University of the South's commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and election participation.

LEADERSHIP

The Office of Civic Engagement's Coordinator for Student Programs, Morgan Jennings, manages and coordinates all of *Yea, Sewanee Votes!* voter engagement events, programs and activities. Morgan collaborates with Annalise Eiffert (C'25), Democratic Engagement Fellow, Dr. Lydia Reinig, Director of Dialogue Across Difference Programs and Dr. Joseph Coll, professor of politics to plan and execute voter engagement activities.

Yea, Sewanee Votes! Team

Morgan Jennings, Coordinator for Student Programming, Office of Civic Engagement
Annalise Eiffert (C'25), Democratic Engagement Intern

Faculty/Staff Advisory Group

Dr. Jim Peterman, Director of The Office of Civic Engagement and Professor of Philosophy
Lydia Reinig, Director of Dialogue Across Difference Programs
Dr. Joseph Coll, Visiting Assistant Professor of Politics
Dr. Sean O'Rourke, Director of the Center for Speaking and Listening
Dr. Melody Lehn, Assistant Director of the Center for Speaking & Listening

Student Organizations

Sewanee Order of the Gown
Sewanee NAACP
Bairnwick Women's Center
Sewanee Debate Union
Sewanee Young Democratic Socialists
Sewanee Democrats Society
Sewanee College Republicans

COMMITMENT

University Mission

The University of the South is an institution of the Episcopal Church dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom in close community and in full freedom of inquiry, and enlightened by Christian faith in the Anglican tradition, welcoming individuals from all backgrounds, to the end that students be prepared to search for truth, seek justice, preserve liberty under law, and serve God and humanity.

The College of Arts and Sciences is committed to the development of the whole person through a liberal arts education of the highest quality. Outstanding students work closely with distinguished and diverse faculty in a demanding course of humane and scientific study that prepares them for lives of achievement and service. Providing rich opportunities for leadership and intellectual and spiritual growth, while grounding its community on a pledge of honor, Sewanee enables students to live with grace, integrity, and a reverent concern for the world.

UNIVERSITY VALUES

- **INQUIRY**
We develop open-minded, informed, and intellectually engaged individuals.
- **COMMUNITY**
We cultivate respectful, inclusive, and enduring relationships.
- **FLOURISHING**
We share responsibility for the well-being of one another and the Domain.
- **COURAGE**
We strive for justice, equity, and sustainability in Sewanee and in the broader society.

The Office of Civic Engagement

VISION

Active global citizens advancing economic, social, and environmental well-being.

MISSION

To cultivate knowledge, resources, and relationships to advance the economic, social, and environmental well-being of our communities.

HOW THE OCE LIVES INTO THE UNIVERSITY VALUES

- **INQUIRY**
We develop socially-engaged, collaborative, and reflective individuals committed to the exchange of knowledge for the common good.
- **COMMUNITY**
We cultivate and sustain inclusive community relationships which provide belonging and appreciation of one another to create positive social change.
- **FLOURISHING**
We build flourishing communities made up of caring individuals by seeing, hearing, and valuing others and ourselves, as a step toward offering caring, respectful, mutually beneficial forms of engagement.
- **COURAGE**
We create inclusive spaces where individual experiences are celebrated; differing perspectives are encouraged; injustices are challenged, and vulnerability is valued.

As stated in the [University's Purpose](#), The University of the South is committed to preparing students to, "search for truth, seek justice, preserve liberty under law, and serve God and humanity". Civic engagement plays a crucial role in this effort to prepare students for "lives of achievement and service", but it is our hope to formalize Sewanee's commitment to voter engagement in the near future.

Sewanee NSLV Data 2020

TOTAL ENROLLMENT

1749

TOTAL ELIGIBLE VOTERS

1674

REGISTERED STUDENTS

1474

STUDENTS WHO VOTED

1112

66.4%

2020 Voting Rate

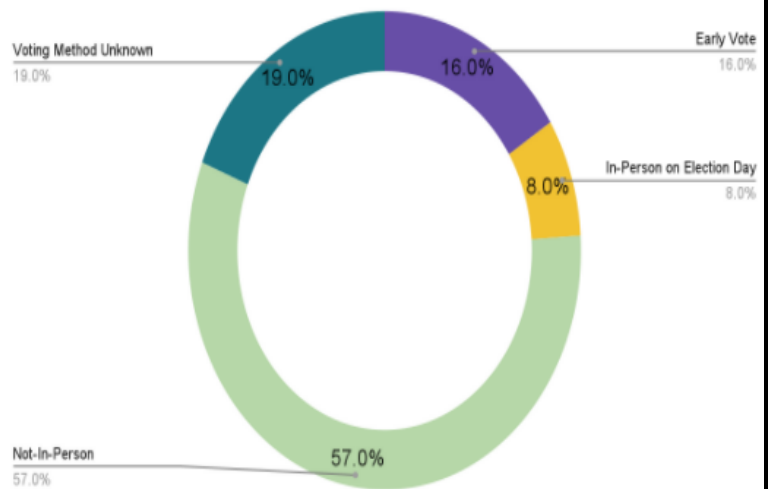
+29.1

Change from 2016

88%

2020 Registration Rate

Voting Methods



In 2020, our registration rate **increased**. Our voting rate also **increased** and was **around** the voting rate for all institutions (66%).

LANDSCAPE

During the last presidential election cycle in 2020, most of Sewanee's democratic engagement initiatives were created with the goal of increasing student on voter registration. According to Sewanee's 2020 NSLV data, the registration rate increased from 75.6% in 2016 to 88%. 407 potential electors accessed voting resources Sewanee's campus-specific TurboVote website. Of this group, 324 successfully registered to vote. 250 users cast ballots in the General Election on or before November 3, 2020. That's a 79.61% registration rate (324 / 407) and a 77.16% turnout rate among eligible voters (250 / 324). In comparison, the median TurboVote registration rate among campus partners with 30 or more users was 84.03%, and national turnout of registered voters, as calculated from the voter file, was 78.52%."

According to NSLV, Sewanee's voting rate increased from 37.3% in 2016 to 66.4% in 2020, putting Sewanee right around the voting rate of all institutions surveyed which was 66%. Though this turnout is encouraging, we understand that much of it can be attributed to the presidential election. In order to prevent our voting rate from decreasing this year, we plan

to remain vigilant in our efforts and build off of this increased political efficacy in preparation for the 2022 midterm elections.

2022-2024 GOALS AND STRATEGY

The aim of the 2022 Democratic Engagement Initiative, *Yea, Sewanee Votes!*, is to increase voter engagement and education among Sewanee students, faculty, and staff, and to foster a campus culture of civic responsibility that will keep students, faculty, and staff engaged even after the 2024 election.

Goals

1. Increase student voter registration
 - a. Targets were 85% in 2020 (which we were able to exceed), and our hope is to maintain this into the 2022 midterms
2. Increase student voting rate
 - a. Targets are 40% in 2022
3. Build culture of democratic engagement on Sewanee's campus
4. Run regular, excellent events that promote democratic engagement and civics education
5. Create a larger network of people who are passionate about democratic engagement on campus. This will be composed of campus organizations, student leaders, civic engagement staff, and Sewanee faculty.

Strategy Areas

1. INCREASING VOTER REGISTRATION

Make voter registration easy, accessible, and immediately available: Work with student-led organizations across Sewanee's campus to develop a voter registration tabling calendar that attempts to reach new populations (athletes, greek organization members, etc.) We also have created [state-specific voting guides](#) available online.

Increase Access to Voting via Absentee Ballot: Sewanee's NSLV data indicates that a large number of students vote absentee. As students come from further away geographically and have limited exposure to the surrounding community that makes up the majority of our campus's electoral district, absentee voting is appealing to many of our students. This insight shapes much of the strategy that follows:

- Create materials to students on [how to vote absentee](#)
- Publicize dates of primary elections in each state, as well as registration, ballot request, and submission deadlines
- Publicize what resources The Office of Civic Engagement can offer (e.g. helping students navigate the registration process, mailing help including free stamps)
- Create media schedule (emails, posters, social) surrounding dates for sending out emails about registration, and absentee ballots

Establish assistance with voting while abroad: Coordinate with The Office of Global Citizenship to ensure that students studying abroad in the Fall of 2022 have access to information about how to cast their vote.

2. PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT AND CIVIC EDUCATION

Develop Plan for DebateWatch Events: Continue hosting DebateWatch events in collaboration with Sewanee's Center for Speaking and Listening and work to tweak the program to increase participation. Develop a Virtual Debate Watch plan if needed.

Support student driven events and programming ideas: Leverage office resources to meet student demand for events and training related to democratic engagement. These events may include programming around voter suppression and training on how to be civically engaged beyond voting.

Bring speakers to campus prior to election: Plan to bring relevant speakers to campus to enrich the conversation surrounding politics and democratic engagement into the 2024 election. Work to host two representatives from the Congress to Campus Program in the fall of 2023. Collaborate with our faculty advisory group and politically-active student organizations to create the program schedule.

3. FOSTERING A CAMPUS CULTURE OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

Build a network of students, faculty, staff, and community members committed to

Democratic Engagement: Continue to create relationships with student organizations and University offices, such as student political organizations, The Bairnwick Women's Center, and The Center for Speaking and Listening, to expand YSV! network of individuals who are excited to champion political engagement.

Increase opportunities for engaging across political differences: Work with Dialogue Across Difference Programs to create opportunities for students to thoughtfully engage across political differences. Provide all campus groups the ability to voice their political opinions respectfully and participate in D.E. opportunities.

Connect student leadership to civic action: Help students make connections between their engagement on campus and the national political landscape by working with new student organizations such as student government, pre-med, and environment and sustainability majors to bring the issues they care about into our programming.

Increase campus presence of Yea, Sewanee Votes!: Increase visibility of programs and normalize democratic participation by rebranding YSV! and creating new logos and swag that students are excited to show off.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Office of Civic Engagement has partnered with the following internal campus-specific groups and external organizations:

- ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge (external, national)
- TurboVote (external, national)
- Bonner Network (internal, campus)
- Canale Service and Leadership Interns (internal, campus)
- Tennessee Campus Democracy Network (external, statewide)
- The Fourth Founding Project at Stanford University (external, small cohort of 11 universities)
- Voter Friendly Campus (external, national)
- CivicTN (external, statewide)
- Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP)

REPORTING AND EVALUATION

Yea, Sewanee Votes! will coordinate a meeting in the spring of 2023 to discuss how our 2022 efforts went and how to improve in the future. Our TurboVote administrator will look at TurboVote data to see which of our campaigns were most and least successful. We will distribute a survey after the election to discern how impactful our efforts were at students' decision to vote. Finally, when we receive our next NSLVE data we will review and compare it to the previous reports and use this insight to inform future plans.

At the end of each semester, we will analyze data that will be collected throughout the semester to determine the following:

- Number of student encounters at registration events
- Voters registered through Turbovote
- Voters registered by paper
- Registered voters who voted
- Attendees at voter education events
- Qualitative responses to surveys given out at each educational event
- Results from the survey after the election to discern how impactful our efforts were at students' decision to vote