

Siena College

2024 Democratic Engagement Action Plan



I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by the Voter Friendly Campus group at Siena College. Our democratic engagement plan will be carried out through the 2024 presidential election in the Fall 2024 semester, with evaluation activities occurring in the Spring 2025 semester. The plan involves a coalition of student groups, institutional organizations, and external partners, including Political Science Society, the department of Political Science & International Relations, the Center for the Study of Government & Politics, the ENACT Your Vote program at Brandeis University, and the League of Women Voters. We plan to help students register and create voting plans through face-to-face engagement tactics and utilization of the Motivote tool. We also plan to engage in a broad information campaign focused on voting resources, deadlines, and election engagement. These activities will begin during first year student orientation and will continue through Election Day. We will begin with a focus on registration and absentee ballot requests, then shift to voting plans, and finally focus on voter turnout as early voting begins. The plan is primarily focused on the 2024 election, but will also serve as a foundation to pursue longer term goals of universal student participation and voting equity.

II. Leadership

Voter Friendly Campus

The Siena Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) group will spearhead our democratic engagement campaign for the 2024 election. VFC is a part of the Political Science Society, a nonpartisan student club dedicated to fostering civic engagement through discussion, debate, and participation in elections.

The club is advised by Dr. Daniel Lewis, Professor of Political Science and ENACT the Vote Faculty Fellow (International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, Brandeis University). He will serve as the primary VFC advisor and liaison with College administration

- VFC is chaired by Kristen Kiernan '25, ENACT the Vote Student Fellow (International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, Brandeis University). She will oversee all campaign activities and serve a primary liaison to other student clubs and programs.
- The VFC committee also includes:
 - James Hamilton '24, who served as interim VFC Chair and ENACT the Vote Student Fellow (International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, Brandeis University) during the Spring 2024 semester.
 - Amelia Risinit '24
 - Emily Atassi '24
 - Jillian O'Rourke '25
 - Avery Marshall '25
 - Additional members TBD

Political Science Society

- Aly Yezik '25, Political Science Society President

- Christina Peppy '25, Political Science Society Vice President
- Christian Reynolds '25, Political Science Society Secretary

Coalition of Student Organizations

In addition to the leadership of VFC and Political Science Society, we are building a coalition of student organizations to support the campaign. These organizations include the Pre-Law Society, the Democrats Club, the Asian Student Association, the Black Student Union, the Latinx Student Association, the Muslim Student Association, Mock Trial, the PRIDE-Gay/Straight Student Alliance, the Republican Club, the Social Work Club, the Student Athlete Council, and the Student Senate.

We will work with these groups to coordinate various activities like tabling and canvassing events. They will also be utilized to communicate with a wide range of students and stakeholders on campus.

Campus Partners

Following the success of our partnership with the Athletic Department in 2020, we plan to continue this work, encouraging them to commit to the MACC challenge. We also seek to continue our partnership with the Damietta Cross-Cultural Center that provides support, services, and events that promote diversity and inclusion on campus. In addition, we are coordinating with the Standish Library to help share our election materials and encourage students to utilize the Motivote website. Of course, we will also continue to partner with the Department of Political Science & International Relations, along with the Center for the Study of Government

& Politics, both of which are dedicated to increasing student civic engagement and will be organizing election-related events during the election season.

External Partners

We plan to work with at least two partners external to the Siena community. First, we have partnered with the ENACT Your Vote program sponsored by the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life at Brandeis University. This program has provided financial support for the purchase of materials for our campaign, including prizes, giveaways, and food for our events and programs. The program has conducted regular meetings to develop campaign tactics design to foster civic engagement. In addition, the program has given Siena College access to our own Motivote website, which we use as our primary tool to register students and create voting plans.

We are also partnering with the Albany County League of Women Voters to register students to vote and mobilize them leading up to the election. We are planning tabling events and hope to co-host debates for local races such as the Albany County District Attorney.

III. Commitment

Our institution and campus leadership are committed to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. In 2020, the President's Office and the Provost sent out multiple emails encouraging every student to vote. The president also signed the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation and our athletic department participated in the MAAC challenge. In 2024, the President's Office has continued our commitment to the ALL IN

program and will be communicating directly with the campus to community to encourage civic participation in 2024.

However, we are seeking to expand their support for pursuing these goals. Unfortunately, we were barred for canvassing door-to-door in residence halls in 2022 due to a non-solicitation policy. This limited our face-to face interactions with students that are less interested in politics. So, we are seeking gain more support from the College in contacting students in person at residence and dining halls. We are also seeking to gain more access to broad communication avenues like all-student email lists and college social media sites.

Students leaders are quite committed to putting in the work needed to ensure that all Siena students can vote in the 2024. We are developing plans to recruit additional volunteers to help our campaign activities and broaden our coalition.

IV. Landscape

Siena participate in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), but we only have data from 2020. In 2020 our registration rate was 85.3%. In comparison to the data from 2016, this rate increased by 10.7%. In 2020, our voting rate among registered students was 80%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased by 22.3%. In 2020, our voting rate was 68.3%. In comparison, to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased by an astounding 25.3%. Our voting rate was similar to the institutional average of 66%.

Based on data provided in our NSLVE report, 3,374 students were enrolled at Siena College in 2020. A total of 177 were Asian; 116 were Black; 286 were Hispanic; 2,666 were White; and 99 were Multiracial. A total of 2,988 students were between the ages of 18-21; 269 were between

the ages of 22-24, 65 were between the ages of 25-29; 36 were between the ages of 30-39; and 12 were between the ages of 40-49. 1,877 students were female and 1,503 were male.

In our NSLVE report, we have racial data for the following groups: Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, and Multiracial. For those racial groups, voter rates were in higher comparison to the data from four years prior. In 2020, the voting rate among registered Asian students was 55% — higher than the institutional average. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased by 19%. In 2020, the voting rate among registered Black students was 45% — lower than the institutional average. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased by 11%. In 2020, the voting rate among registered Hispanic students was 52% — lower than the institutional average. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased by 25%. In 2020, the voting rate among registered Multiracial students was 56% — lower than the institutional average. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased by 17%. In 2020, the voting rate among registered White students was 71% — higher than the institutional average. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased by 26%.

Without our 2022 NSLVE data, it is difficult to assess how the civic engagement of our students has shifted since 2020. However, the Siena College Factbook (Fall 2023) does provide some insight into these changes. First, the undergraduate enrollment has grown from 3,187 to 3,497. Our graduate student enrollment was steady at about 100 students, but will be starting new programs in the Fall 2024 semester that will bring in at least an addition 100 students. As such our outreach efforts need to broaden in 2024. In terms of racial and ethnic diversity, the student

from about body has become relatively more diverse, with the percentage of white, non-Hispanic students declining slightly from about 80% to about 76%.

Perhaps the most helpful demographic data on our student body is geography. About 80% of students come from New York, with most from the Capital Region. Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Jersey each account for another 3-6% of the student body. This narrow geographic focus can inform our communications strategy. Since most student live within a few hours' drive of campus, messaging around earlier voting plans may be helpful. We also see that there has been an increase in commuter students, accounting for 25% of the undergraduates – up from about 20% in 2020. This suggests that partnering with the Commuter Student Association may be a fruitful approach.

V. Goals

Short-term Goals

For the 2024 election cycle our goals include:

- Increasing student voting-eligible registration rates from 85% in 2020 to 95% in 2024
- Increasing student voting-eligible voting rates from 68% in 2020 to 75% in 2024
- Reduce gaps in voting rates between ethnic and racial groups on campus
- Expanding our campus coalition to include more student clubs and on-campus institutional partners
- Enroll 500 students on the Siena Motivote website

Long-term Goals

Over the next 2-3 election cycles, we aim to:

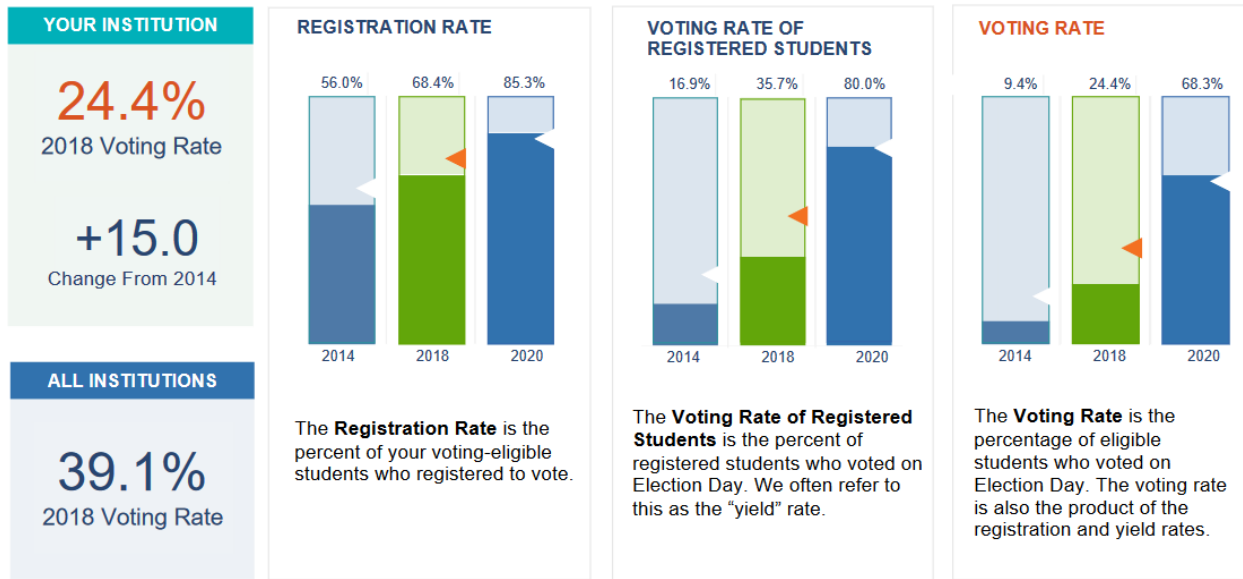
- Increase student voting-eligible registration rates in presidential elections to 100%
- Increase student voting-eligible voting rates to 85% for presidential elections and 60% for midterm elections
- Eliminate gaps in voting rates between racial and ethnic groups
- Integrate voter registration and civic participation into student orientation, first year seminar, and other required elements of the Siena experience.
- Expand our partnership with community organizations to foster civic participation off campus and connect students to local issues in the town of Colonie, NY.

VI. NSLVE

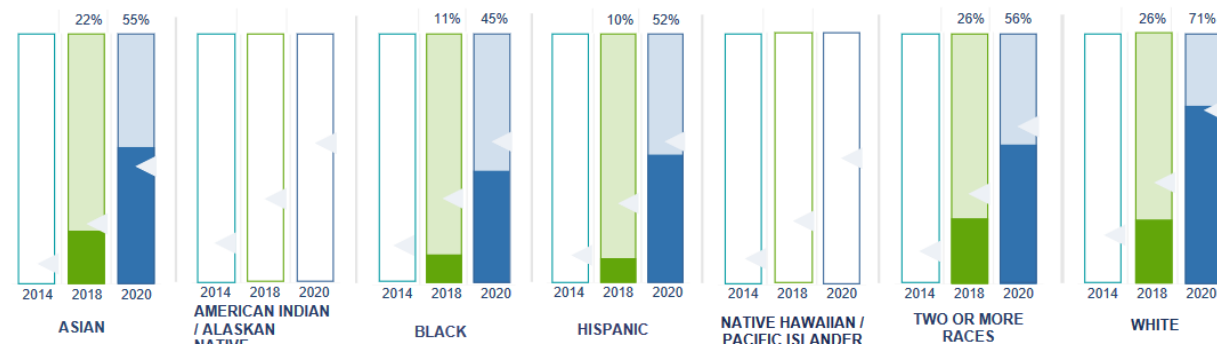
As noted in Section IV, we are participating in the NSLVE and use it to inform our strategies and assess our campaign efforts. Unfortunately, we have not received data from the 2022 election and must rely on the 2020 data. This earlier report shows a trend of increasing registration and turnout that coincides with the start of Siena's Voter Friendly Campus initiative in 2018. As such, we believe that our efforts have been successful so far, though we have much more to do in future election cycles.

Indeed, the NSLVE data has highlighted the areas of success, like high registration rates, and areas for improvement, such as low midterm turnout rates and racial/ethnic gaps in turnout. We will continue to use this data to inform and assess our efforts going forward.

Voting, Registration and Yield Rates



By Race / Ethnicity



VII. Strategy

2024 Election Strategy

Our strategy to increase student registration and voting is built around two primary tactics. First, we aim to engage with all 3,500 students face-to-face. Political science research shows that face-to-face appeals tend to be most effective in mobilizing voters since it provides social connection and pressure. To engage with students face-to-face, we will use multiple approaches. We will start the year participating in first year student orientation. This will allow us to reach students from their first days on campus and ensure that they know how to register,

change their registration location, and request absentee ballots. Next, we will engage in regular tabling in the student union, dining halls, and other high-traffic areas. Rather than passively tabling, however, we plan to actively approach students, allowing us to engage with students that might not come up to the table on their own. Ideally, we would canvas door-to-door in residence halls, but the current non-solicitation policy prevents this. We are working with the administration to address this obstacle.

In student orientation, tabling, and canvassing, we plan to use a message about creating a voting plan. Since many of our students come from New York and live within a two hour drive of campus, they remain registered at their home address and do not have a specific plan to return to vote. As such, we plan to provide information about requesting absentee ballots and identifying early voting opportunities on the weekends prior to Election Day. While will also inform students about changing their registration address to Siena's campus, previous experiences showed that students are reluctant to do so. In these activities, we plan to partner with student organizations, institutional groups, and external partners.

Financial support for these activities comes from ENACT Fellowships, Political Science Society, and the Center for the Study of Government and Politics. We plan to use these resources to purchase giveaways, like t-shirts, stickers, and pins, that will not only provide incentivize student engagement, but will also advertise the election.

The second main prong of our strategy is to use the Motivate website to serve as a voter information tool and reminder for students. Research shows that lowering costs of registration and voting can increase participation. In addition, small reminders (or nudging) can also boost participation. Motivate works as tool that connects users to voter resources – checking registration status, upcoming elections, and candidate profiles. It also can provide reminders and

notifications about upcoming election deadlines. It does all of this while “gamifying” civic engagement. Users can earn points for various civic engagement actions, from registering to vote and requesting a ballot to writing a letter to their state legislator. Points can be redeemed for prizes. It also allows students to create teams to compete with others across sports teams, programs, or even clubs. We plan to use Motivate as primary talking point in our face-to-face strategy.

MOTIVOTE

Siena's Motivate Webpage is a one-stop-shop to...

- (1) Check your voter registration status
- (2) Get information on making plans to vote
- (3) Earn points throughout and compete to earn custom prizes

Scan the Qr Code to take you to the Siena Motivate webpage

In addition to our face-to-face engagement and use of the Motivote tool, we're planning a board information campaign to ensure students are aware of registration, absentee ballot request, and various voting deadlines. We'll also seek to provide information about key races, such as the presidency and key state and local races. We plan on using a variety of media in this effort. We'll use the Student Digest, which sends a daily list of announcements to students' emails. We'll also use social media, such as Instagram and Tik Tok, to post messages and links to resources. For these outlets, we'll partner with clubs and organizations that have a large number of followers. We will also partner with the Siena College Communications department, which publishes weekly newsletters and provides additional social media avenues. The communications plan will also incorporate academic department and program emails. The Standish Library is developing a plan to market our Motivote flyers into their video displays around campus.

Last, we will coordinate speaker events to generate interest in the election. We will be working with the Center for the Study of Government & Politics on a Constitution Day speaker that will focus on the election. We are also working with the League of Women Voters to host a local candidate debate. We plan on working with student clubs to encourage election-focused events and speakers ahead of the election.

VIII. Reporting

This Action Plan will be shared among VFC and its partner organizations. In the past we have posted turnout rates from the NSLVE on the college website and various social media outlets. We certainly share our ALL IN and VFC recognitions as broadly as possible.

IX. Evaluation

We plan to evaluate our 2024 campaign in several ways. First, we will examine the 2024 NSLVE to see if we met our turnout goals. We'll also examine Motivote numbers – both the number of students that signed up as well how much they engaged with the tool. Motivote also gives us a glimpse, through its team functionality, to see where students on the site are coming from (e.g., athletics teams, social science programs, student clubs, etc.).

We also plan to conduct a campus survey in Spring 2025 evaluating student experiences with voting. We conducted surveys in Spring 2018 and again in Spring 2023 that helped us identify the challenge that student facing in returning home to vote. Though we face challenges in generating a representative sample, we plan to work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to field a quality survey in 2025.