

Siena College
Democratic Engagement Action Plan



I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by the Siena Votes coalition to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at Siena College. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over the 2022 midterm election year, on our campus in Loudonville, New York.

This plan will be implemented with the help of students and student organizations, the President's Office, the Provost, the Vice President, the academic deans, Government Affairs, Student Activities, Community Living, the communications team, the Franciscan Center, the Damietta Cross-Cultural Center, the Bowman Center for Women, and the Athletics Department in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections.

This plan will focus on short-term goals that the coalition will seek to accomplish in order to increase registration and participation in the 2022 midterm election, and will undergo revisions on an as-needed basis throughout the calendar year.

II. Leadership

Dr. Daniel Lewis, *Department Chair and Associate Professor of Political Science*, will oversee our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus.

Michael Connors '25, *Voter Friendly Campus Chair*, will oversee all voter registration and participation efforts and will be coordinating with all offices, departments, and organizations who are ready and willing to help the coalition accomplish the goals set forth in this plan.

Amelia Risinit '24, *Outreach Director*, will be responsible for marketing efforts and coordinating with offices that include, but are not limited to, the associate and assistant directors of marketing.

Lauren Waters '23, *Mobilization Coordinator*, will be responsible for door-to-door canvassing and tabling and coordinating with offices that include, but are not limited to, Student Activities and Community Living.

Kristen Kiernan '25, *Mobilization Coordinator*, will be responsible for putting on events, reaching out to clubs and coordinating with offices that include, but are not limited to, Student Activities and the Student Senate.

Carly Fanning '23, *Classroom Coordinator*, will be responsible for freshman orientation, First Year Seminar, classroom outreach, and coordinating with offices that include, but are not limited to, the academic departments and the First Year Seminar co-directors.

Jimmy Hamilton '25, *Deputy Classroom Coordinator*, will be responsible for freshman orientation, First Year Seminar, classroom outreach, and coordinating with offices that include, but are not limited to, the academic departments and the First Year Seminar co-directors.

Emily Atassi '25, *Deputy Classroom Coordinator*, will be responsible for freshman orientation, First Year Seminar, classroom outreach, and coordinating with offices that include, but are not limited to, the academic departments and the First Year Seminar co-directors.

We will coordinate with a variety of clubs that are willing to help their members get out the vote in November. We will also coordinate with the Student Government Association which consists of the Student Senate, the Student Events Board, and the Commuter Student Association. We are a Voter Friendly Campus Designee and we are also participating in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge.

Our coalition will meet weekly in the lead-up to the midterm election, on an as-needed basis, and will maintain constant contact with members.

III. Offices, Departments, and Organizations

The President's Office will help our coalition by emphasizing the importance of voting to students.

The Provost will help our coalition by emphasizing the importance of voting to students.

The Vice President and Director of Athletics will help our coalition by focusing on registering student athletes.

The Dean of the School of Liberal Arts will help our coalition by sponsoring events on campus and offering financial aid to assist us in organizing our efforts.

The Director of the Center for the Study of Government and Politics will help our coalition by offering financial aid to assist us in organizing our efforts.

Student Activities and Leadership Development will help our coalition by assisting us in voter registration drives during events such as the Fall Club Fair.

The Director of the Office of Community Living will help our coalition by reserving space in residence hall lobbies to register voters and assist them in requesting absentee ballots. In addition, they will publish content on the Division of Student Life's social media pages.

The Associate and Assistant Directors of Marketing will help our coalition by creating content for social media.

The Director of the Franciscan Center will help our coalition by holding voter registration drives and hosting non-partisan discussions about the election and candidates. They will also publish content on their social media pages to encourage students to vote on Election Day.

The Director of the Damietta Cross-Cultural Center will help our coalition by hosting non-partisan forums for students to voice their opinions and concerns prior to Election Day. They will also offer the chapel as a quiet place in which students can reflect on their vote and the election.

The Albany County Board of Elections will help our coalition by providing legal advice, tangible materials such as flyers and brochures with deadlines and important dates, and on-site voter registration drives.

IV. Commitment

Our institution and campus leadership increasingly demonstrates commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement; however, the college could place more emphasis on these principles. The college does emphasize inclusivity and leadership in its mission statement, saying, “We respect and care for the dignity of all people while celebrating the diversity that enriches our community...We lead by putting others first, through our commitment to social justice, service with others, and concern for the poor and vulnerable.”

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. On campus, voter education resources will be made readily available to all students, voter registration drives will be regularly held, and door-to-door canvassing will be utilized in all campus residence halls.

There are multiple political clubs and organizations for students to choose from — both partisan and nonpartisan — such as the Siena College Democrats, the Siena College Republicans, and the Political Science Society which all promote voting among its members. Clubs may bring in speakers to discuss the importance of voting and participating in the democratic process, hold town hall meetings, and students will have the opportunity to vote for student leaders in a variety of clubs and organizations across campus.

The Colonie Town Hall is located across the street from Siena College and offers those who are locally registered a place to vote in-person on Election Day. All efforts listed above and more will be carried out in the lead-up to the midterm election to increase voter turnout among students.

V. Landscape & National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Our campus has access to our National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data for 2020. In 2020 our registration rate was 85.3%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, 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%.

Midterm election years always present a bigger challenge than presidential election years. On top of that, voter turnout is even lower among college students with Siena falling even lower than the institutional average according to our NSLVE report. In 2018, our voting rate was only 24.4% — 15% lower than the institutional average. In 2018, the voting rate among registered Asian students was 22% — higher than the institutional average. In 2018, the voting rate among registered Black students was 11% — lower than the institutional average. In 2018, the voting rate among registered Hispanic students was 10% — lower than the institutional average. In 2018, the voting rate among registered White students was 26% — lower than the institutional average. In 2018, the voting rate among registered Multiracial students was 26% — lower than the institutional average.

VI. Goals

Our coalition consists of students, administrators, faculty, and staff who are positioned to implement the democratic engagement goals laid out in this plan:

- Register 100% of incoming students during orientation
- Register 100% of students living on and off campus
- Increase voter participation to 100% among all students living on and off campus
 - Focus on undergraduate students
 - Focus on students of color
 - Focus on fields of study with lower voter registration and participation such as Computer and Information Sciences and Communication and Journalism
- Reach out to all department heads
 - Focus on departments where voter registration and participation is low
 - Dean of the School of Business
 - Dean of the School of Science
- Implement a democratic engagement curriculum in all First Year Seminar classes going forward
 - The history of voting
 - The importance of voting
 - Voting rights
 - The importance of local elections
 - How voting impacts you
- Achieve voter parity across racial and ethnic groups
 - Close the voter turnout gap

VII. Strategy

To bring our vision to life, below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months:

- Voter registration tables will be present during freshman orientation, the fall club fair, inside residence and dining halls, inside the Sarazen Student Union, and in other locations to be decided at a later date
- Door-to-door canvassing will be utilized to broaden our face-to-face outreach in the weeks leading up to Election Day
 - Students will have the opportunity to
 - Register to vote
 - Request absentee ballots
 - Receive pertinent information about voting, candidates, and issues
- Lockboxes will be strategically placed around campus in high traffic areas to collect voter registration forms and absentee ballot request forms
 - Lonnstrom Dining Hall
 - Massry Dining Hall
 - Sarazen Student Union
 - Standish Library
- Increase voter participation to 100% among all students living on and off campus
 - Focus on undergraduate students
 - Focus on students of color
 - Focus on fields of study with lower voter registration and participation such as Computer and Information Sciences and Communication and Journalism
- Reach out to all department heads
 - Focus on departments where voter registration and participation is low
 - Dean of the School of Business

- Dean of the School of Science

- Discuss the importance of voting and provide the necessary materials to participating First Year Seminar classes, introductory classes, and clubs
- Coordinate with administrators, faculty, and staff to implement a democratic engagement curriculum in all First Year Seminar classes to foster active participation in our political system
- Collaborate with campus affinity clubs to increase registration and participation rates among students of color
 - Focus less on Asian and Hispanic students
 - Focus more on Black and Multiracial students

VIII. Reporting

We plan to share the completed action plan internally by emailing it to members of our campus coalition, comprising several offices, departments, and organizations, including all students, administrators, faculty, and staff that are directly involved, the President's Office and the various academic departments.

We plan to share the completed action plan externally by posting it on Siena College's website, social media, and a variety of campus outlets such as The Promethean, the Daily Digest, and The SCoop. We will reach out to the local news to generate buzz and draw more attention to what the coalition is trying to do in the lead-up to Election Day. It will also be shared with the organizations we work with such as the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and Voter Friendly Campus.

IX. Evaluation

We plan to evaluate our success and collect feedback on our efforts by sending out surveys to a random sample of students on campus who are outside of the coalition to learn whether they are aware of our coalition, if they are registered to vote, if they intend to vote, and if they have a voting plan in place. We will evaluate all feedback and integrate what is valuable into individual campus efforts. We will also review our NSLVE data and look for improvements year over year, as well as revisit our goals to identify which goals have and have not been achieved. We will adjust our short- and long-term goals accordingly.