



Simmons University 202/2024 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Meghan Doran

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Simmons University in Massachusetts for the 2022 and 2024 elections. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2022 midterm election and the 2024 election. The goals for Simmons University for the 2022 election are to increase student voter turnout rate to 60% in 2022 and 80% in 2024; and to increase student voter registration rate to 86% in 2022 and 92% in 2024

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following:

Meghan Doran - Director of Community Engagement
Courtney Kramer - Assistant Director of Community Engagement
Rae-Anne Butera - Dean of Students

Our Center for Community Engagement has recently become the advisory office for the student club, Democracy Matters. We are committed to partnering with students to build a robust and collaborative plan for the 2024 elections building on what is included in this action plan.

Our campus works with these following nonprofit partners:
Campus Compact

Commitment:

Since 1899, Simmons has offered a pioneering liberal arts education for undergraduate women integrated with professional work experience. Today, Simmons also encompasses the many benefits of a small university, including renowned coeducational graduate programs in health sciences, education, liberal arts, library and information science, management, and social work.

For more than 100 years, a Simmons education has integrated professional preparation, intellectual exploration, and community orientation, because all three approaches are necessary for success. At Simmons, we value the many dimensions of identity — including race, class, ethnicity, and sexual identity — and reflect that in our curriculum, affiliated organizations, and community partnerships.

Civic engagement is central to Simmons University's Mission "to provide transformative learning with lifelong purpose." This commitment is further reflected in President Lynn Perry Wooten's stated strategic priorities including "a commitment to inclusive excellence and social justice." and "a philanthropic call to action."

Civic engagement happens across the curriculum in our graduate and undergraduate programs, both on the ground and online. The University's Center for Community Engagement coordinates both curricular and co-curricular community-based learning opportunities, and is the primary space for voter education and civic engagement on campus. On a whole, Simmons students, faculty, and staff are highly engaged and deeply concerned about issues of social justice. According to the NSLVE, our voter registration rates are consistently above the national average. Simmons University joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2020 and has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2020.

Landscape:

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Simmons University has 6,635 students. Approximately 25% of these students are undergraduates and 75% are graduate students. In 2020, 56% of students identified as white, 25% as ALANA, with remaining as unidentified. Simmons has a small international population (<3%). Among our undergraduate population approximately 63% were from Massachusetts, and 20% from other New England States. Due to robust online graduate programs, our graduate students tend to be more dispersed across the country. Amongst our undergraduate population, 43% were ages 18-19, 38% were ages 20-21, 9% were ages 22-24, 9% were ages 25+, and 1% were under 18 years old. Amongst our graduate students, 20% were under 25 years old, 36% were 25-29 years old, 17% were 30-34 years old 10% were 35-39 years old, 12% were 40-49 years old and 5% were 50+ years old

Simmons University has authorized NSLVE. Our institution had a 2020 campus voting rate of 77.8%. Our institution had a 2020 voter registration rate of 89.2%. Our institution had a 2018 voter turnout rate of 54.5%. Our institution had a 2018 voter registration rate of 84.3%.

Our institution has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals: 2020 Gold

Goals:

While we our voter registration and turnout rates remain above the national average, we maintain a commitment to full voter participation. We have engaged in some tabling and information distribution in 2022 which we hope will increase our participation rates for this election and our planning a fuller strategy for the 2024 election.

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

Increase student voter turnout rate to 60% in 2022 and 80% in 2024.

Increase student voter registration rate to 86% in 2022 and 92% in 2024.

Strategy:

Simmons University will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation. Our institution aims to spend the 2023-2024 academic year planning with student groups for voter engagement in the 2024 state and national elections. We will adopt the following strategies:

- Spring 2023: post-2022 election SimmVotes party after release of NSLVE data. This will feature an on-the-ground celebration and an online marketing campaign to feature the results and announce our goals for the 2024 election.
- Fall 2023: create a graduate student advisory group to better engage our large graduate student population in civic engagement and voting activities
- Academic Year 2023-2024 Launch a Pledge to Vote/Voter registration campaign on [Civic Holidays](#) like National Voter Registration Day and National Voter Education Week, with raffle prizes for students who register or take the pledge.
- Academic Year 2023-2024 Launch a Digital "Why I Vote" Campaign to reach our Online Students with raffle prizes
- Fall 2024: continued tabling; coordinate with academic departments to host fora about the 2024 presidential and other elections.

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

NLSVE will be the main tool for evaluating our success. We will also measure student engagement by tracking who participates in our on-the-ground and digital campaigns, and elicit student feedback from events we hold.

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/simmons-college/>.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our NSLVE reports which are posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website.

SimmVOTES celebrations will be held in conjunction with the release of NSLVE data, along with a marketing campaign to reach our broader community. This action plan and NSLVE reports will be posted on the Center for Community Engagement website.