

SMCC 2024 ALL IN ACTION PLAN

May 31st, 2024

Executive Summary

This Action Plan communicates Southern Maine Community College's strategies for increasing registration rates and voter turnout among our entire student population (online, South Portland campus, and Midcoast campus in Brunswick, ME). This action plan outlines current strategies that have been implemented by Maine Students Vote and Student Life, as well as new strategies and methods to be implemented over the next two years by the SMCC Nonpartisan Campus Voting Coalition. This plan will be reviewed and adapted in the Spring of 2026.

This action plan is a living document that will continue to grow and adapt based on the needs of our students and institution. These strategies will be continually assessed, improved upon, and implemented by the Coalition each election cycle. This plan will cement SMCC's commitment to civic learning, election engagement, and youth participation in local government, as is our duty as a local non-profit education institution developing the future of Maine's workforce.

This plan was written by Campus Voting Coalition Leader and Assistant Director of Student Life Tori Penney, who has overseen voter engagement at SMCC for 3 years. Penney is the Advisor to the Student Senate, main contact for ALL-IN and Maine Students Vote, and works closely with SMCC's diversity initiatives, including the Diversity and Equity Governance Committee, who is responsible for evaluating and implementing diversity initiatives at the college, and is Chair of the Diversity Programming Committee, which is responsible for developing and hosting co-curricular diversity and equity programming on our campuses.

Leadership

The SMCC Nonpartisan Campus Voting Coalition is a new addition to SMCC in the summer of 2024. Previously, all planning and actions were overseen by Assistant Director of Student Life Tori Penney, Student Senate Faculty Advisor and Professor of Political Science Herb Adams, and Allyson Gardner, Director of Maine Students Vote. To increase our success, sustainability, and institutionalization of civic and democratic engagement on campus, as well as to include a wider variety of perspectives and experience, Student Life is recruiting campus and community members to develop the Coalition.

The Coalition Leader, and person responsible for facilitating this work, is Assistant Director of Student Life Tori Penney. This work will be funded and overseen by the Student Life Department. A recruitment email will be sent to the entire SMCC community, and any interested parties can meet. The group will meet biweekly on Zoom to create the most equitable and accessible option for members. Current members are listed below.

The members of this team are prevalent and returning members to the SMCC community, so we do not expect much turnover. From year to year and as vacancies arise, we will actively recruit replacements via advertisements and community messaging. For many of these members their responsibility to this

coalition's work is written within their position descriptions. In the event that the Coalition Leader leaves or must step away from their work, the Executive Team Representative, who is also their supervisor, will be responsible for taking over responsibilities, delegating tasks, and training their replacement.

SMCC Nonpartisan Campus Voting Coalition

Coalition Chair: Tori Penney, Assistant Director of Student Life, Coalition Leader
Responsible for overseeing and facilitating the Coalitions work, documenting meeting minutes and actions, and assisting in navigating College policies and practices.

Senate Chair: Kristiana Cox, President of the Student Senate. Kristiana will be compensated via work study funds.

Executive Team Representative: Associate Dean of Students, Douglas Stoves.
Responsible for communicating work and needs between upper Administration and the Coalition. Will advocate for the Coalitions during strategic planning meetings.

Local Government/Election Office Representative, TBD

Residence Life Representative:: Erica Leighton, Director of Residence Life
Responsible for advocating for the needs of residential students, and for implementing the coalitions work within

Maine Students Vote Representative:: Allyson Gardner, Director of Maine Students Vote
Responsible for Maine Students Vote and the League of Women Voters

Political Science Department Representative: Herb Adams, Student Senate Faculty Advisor, Professor of Political Science

Midcoast Staff Representative: Vicki Rose Porter
Responsible for advocating for the needs of Midcoast students, and for communicating initiatives and needs between Midcoast staff/faculty and the Coalition.

Faculty Senate Representative: Julie Mueller, Professor of Political Science, Advisor to Political Science Club
Responsible for communicating initiatives and needs between SMCC Faculty Senate and the Coalition.

Student Senate Representative: Katelyn McKay, Student Senate Representative and Diversity Programming Committee Member. Katelyn will be compensated via work study funds.

Advising and Orientation Chair: Stacey Kardash

Maine Students Vote Fellow, TBD. The Maine Students Vote Fellow is a student at SMCC, and they will be compensated via a stipend from Maine Students Vote.

Midcoast Student Representative, TBD

Student Representative(s), TBD

Commitment

SMCC is committed to promoting civic learning and engagement by offering every student the opportunity to register, vote, and participate in civic advocacy. As a publicly funded institution with great responsibilities to our community, it is not only a federal requirement of our work, but also a passion of ours to develop civically involved students. SMCC is devoted to keeping with its mission, vision, and values. This action plan will enhance SMCC's mission by ensuring students have the ability to lead, inspire, and succeed through civic engagement. This action plan will achieve SMCC's vision by acknowledging that the students come first, and therefore should be given every opportunity to be civically prepared for their post-college careers. This action plan will promote SMCC's core values by giving students the opportunity to engage in their community, building integrity within the student body, allowing students to become leaders within the student body and greater community, and to ultimately find success in their civic participation. We are a part of the Maine Community College System, and other colleges within our system are also dedicated to this work, and work closely with Maine Students Vote. We intend to further streamline our communication between our colleges and to streamline our system-wide practices.

Our senior leadership team is dedicated to this work. We recently appointed a new President, Dr. Kristen Miller, who has encouraged our Student Life team to develop this work further, and has signed the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment. Our Dean of Students has supported us these last few years in joining ALL IN, Ask Every Student, and we look forward to being a part of When We All Vote in the future. Our Associate Dean will be actively involved in our Coalition and will represent and advocate for the Coalition among the leadership team.

We intend to further communicate this commitment via our work, via the assembly of our Coalition, and via public statements made to our community regarding voting. We will also post this on our public web presence to make this known to our larger community.

While we know there is a strong care for civic engagement and learning within our Political Science Department and our Student Senate, we are at this time unaware of the work and care given to this cause within other departments. It will be a responsibility of the Coalition to investigate this further.

Landscape

This information is reported as of Fall 2020 and will be updated with each subsequent NSLVE report.

The following statistics can be found on our public website, smccme.edu.

Total Enrollment: 5,789

- 34% full time, 66% part time
- 57% female, 43% male

Student to Faculty Ratio: 16:1

Enrolled in Training Workshops and Seminars: 1,012

Investigating our current efforts outside of Student Life, as well as further examining and assessing our landscape, will be a responsibility of our Coalition. We will investigate what work and dedication exists among our faculty, staff, departments, student groups, local election officials, community partners, and within our curriculum. We will do this by meeting with departments, speaking at Faculty Senate and Governance Committee meetings, by digging into our college's data with our Institutional Data team. We will utilize the Ask Every Student First Step Form and the resources listed in the Strengthening American Democracy guide to assist. Once we have completed this assessment, we will develop specific learning outcomes for our work.

Our current awareness of work regarding civic engagement and learning is work being done by the Student Life Department, which oversees student leadership education and opportunities, student government, student organizations, and co-curricular programming. Historically, we have offered a number of engagement opportunities for students, but they were not developed with the care to ensure that they were as effective as possible. Events and opportunities previously hosted include:

- Constitution Day Trivia
- Shuttles to the Polls
- Sharing of on campus student data with local election officials to assist with Voter Registration
- Attending the Maine Students Vote Youth Summit

Internal barriers that currently prevent us from being more successful with our civic engagement and education programs include the following:

- Lack of staff to create and host these events. We currently only have one full time staff member within Student Life, the Assistant Director of Student Life, who must manage this work among their other responsibilities.
- Our Student Life Department is two years old, so we are still figuring things out as we go.
- Overseeing two campuses with different staffing has proven a challenge. We hope to establish better communication by having members of the Midcoast campus as chairs on our Coalition board.
- Being a community college, we experience student turnover a lot more than a four year institution. It is hard to train and prepare students to do this work during the 2-3 years they are here, especially considering succession work.
- Our students have a lot going on. Many are nontraditional students that have responsibilities outside of their academics. Getting them actively involved in planning these events and attending them has proven difficult. We have a lot more success among our residential population.

external barriers.

- We have students who attend SMCC from across the state and New England, and many who are from across the country or from other countries. Maine consistently ranks as one of the top three most rural states in the US. Just over a third of students are full time, and while the college offers on campus housing, the majority of students are commuters. Getting information to students regarding their specific polling location can be difficult.

- A challenge with largely commuter colleges is engaging students in events and activities. This requires tailoring events to meet the needs and desires of the student body, which may be difficult to see results for.
- Many of our students come from low income backgrounds, which means that sufficient transportation and various other resources may be lacking. A way to combat this is by creating a bus to the polls event on election day, but this is not helpful for students who have polling locations outside of our area. Therefore, we will focus a significant amount of our time on educating students about absentee ballots.
- Maine has an extremely vibrant voting culture and is generally very involved in its politics. In South Portland and Portland alone, there are 15 voting locations, all within fairly equidistant locations of each other. The challenge is, again, with getting apathetic and transportation lacking persons to the polls. This is another reason why bus to the polls and absentee voting are great ways to get around this issue.

Maine is very involved in political culture and has a long history of civic engagement and expanding rights. In this respect, SMCC, along with any other school in Maine, is perfectly primed to take on voting action. Maine has an unabashed record of voter turnout and SMCC, a school located in the most populated area of Maine, is a fantastic place to present voters with all the knowledge they need to know for election day.

Goals

Our Coalition has not met yet, so many of our goals are yet to be determined. However, our Student Life team have a number of established goals they will recommend to be continued.

1. Recruit and develop our SMCC Nonpartisan Campus Voting Coalition, with our first meeting happening prior to July 1, 2024. Tori Penney will be responsible for this task.
2. We recently enrolled in NSLVE, but have heard that there may be some FERPA concerns that have held us back. We will determine if this is the truth and try to find a solution so that we can benefit from this data. With NSLVE we will be able to centralize our efforts in specific areas where civic engagement is below average.
3. Join and participate in the ALL IN Community College of Practice group. We recently attended our first meeting and look forward to learning from other Community Colleges.
4. Join When We All Vote,
5. For the November 2024 Election, we are hoping to achieve a 65% voter turnout. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to work with the school's administration to implement civic education as a core component of our Student Success course, which all students are required to complete in order to graduate. By implementing civic education as a core part of the curriculum, it will better equip students with the knowledge necessary to engage in the election process, as well as inform them on why diversity, equality, and fairness in the electoral process is important. We would like to see this implemented by the 2026 midterm elections.
6. Participate in civic holidays as outlined by the Ask Every Student organization, including Voter Registration Day and Early Voting Day. There will be efforts to implement debate watch parties and work with staff and faculty to ensure that all students are being reached out to in a sufficient manner. Maine Students Vote, having been a key part of promoting campus engagement, also plans to facilitate more annual Student Voting Summits, which should be advertised and advocated for heavily, when occurring.

7. Recruit two Maine Students Vote Fellows, one on our South Portland campus and another to serve our Midcoast campus in Brunswick. Initial advertisements and invitations to apply went out recently.

Strategy

Maine Students Vote and SMCC applied for a \$5,000 grant through Ask Every Student and were lucky to achieve it. We will utilize this grant funding to pay our student Fellows and help cover costs for their professional development and programming.

Many of our strategies will be determined by the Coalition.

A core structuring of our strategy and timeline will consist of celebrating civic holidays as outlined by the Ask Every Student (AES) organization. Key holidays that we would strive to celebrate would be National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day. On Voter Registration Day we will host events to assist students in registering. During Voter Education Week the Coalition will include tabling and other activities to provide information on candidates, referendums, etc.. Voter Education Week should be celebrated on a minimum of three days of that week. On Vote Early Day we will provide education and resources to request an absentee ballot and locations to vote early for students in the greater Portland area, as well as resources for students outside of this area to find their early voting location.

SMCC will work with Maine based non-profits such as Maine Students Vote and the League of Women Voters of Maine to access resources and leverage capacity in order to reach the most students possible.

The Coalition will develop a timeline that will guide us in our work. The timeline below was developed in preparation for our application for the Ask Every Student grant, and will be further built upon by the Coalition.

Timeline

Date	Activity
June	Recruitment, selection, and training of fellows
July	Brainstorm, plan, and finalize dates for fall election engagements
August	Table at Welcome Week & New Student Orientation, first meeting with Faculty Champions
September	Engage with Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day events, second Faculty Champion meeting
October 7-11	Voter Education Week - Beach Bonfire (voter registration & education with food, games, & fun), tabling in front of Oceanview Dining Hall daily
October 24	Promotion of Vote Early Day, voter registration tables/call to action
October 30- November 5	Get Out the Vote activities & encourage early voting
November 5	ELECTION DAY - SMCC Bus to the Polls!
November	Reflection and recap

Reporting & Evaluation

This plan will be evaluated and altered as necessary each election cycle by SMCC Nonpartisan Campus Voting Coalition. The Coalition Leader will request the most current NSLVE report from the President's office if the report has not already been made publicly available. When the evaluation is complete, the Coalition will develop and submit the action plan to the Student Senate for feedback. When the plan has been finalized then it will be released to the public via the student portal. The Coalition may omit any data and information deemed sensitive or unnecessary.

The action plan should detail where resources should be allocated for underperforming demographics in the student body, and detail how and why these resources should be allocated.

To receive public feedback, students will be able to make their comments and concerns heard in the same manner that they are able to do so to the Student Senate.