

Southern Maine Community College

Action Plan 2022



Executive Summary

This action plan was developed in November 2022 by Brett Stewart, student fellow with Maine Students Vote (MSV), to communicate SMCC's strategy for increasing both registration rates and voter turnout on campus. This action plan outlines strategies that have been implemented by Maine Students Vote and other campus staff and faculty, as well as new strategies and methods to be implemented over the next two years, come the 2024 election cycle. These strategies will be continually assessed, improved upon, and implemented by SMCC's Political Science Club, Student Senate, and future Maine Students Vote fellows each election cycle. This plan will cement SMCC's commitment to civic learning, election engagement, and youth participation in local government.

Leadership

- **Brett Stewart** – MSV fellow, Student Senator
- **Allyson Gardner** – Director of MSV
- **Tori Penney** – Assistant Director of Student Life
- **Patrick Remedis** – Student Activities Coordinator
- **Haden Buzzell** – Student Senate President
- **Herb Adams** – Student Senate Faculty Advisor, Professor
- **Julie Mueller** – Professor of Pol. Sci., Advisor to Pol. Sci. Club

Commitment

SMCC is committed to promoting civic learning and engagement by offering every student the opportunity to register, vote, and participate in civic advocacy. 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.

Landscape

This information is reported as of fall 2020 and will be updated with each subsequent NSLVE report. The following statistics can be found at 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

Challenges:

- **Internal:** Students attending SMCC come from cities and towns all across the state. Only just over a third of students are full time, and while the college offers dorming, the majority of students are commuters. This is why giving information about polling locations can present an extra challenge. It is already hard enough to get people to go to the polls, but it is just as hard to sway apathetic voters to find information themselves. A lot of work has to be geared toward finding polling locations for students, or at least presenting them with information directing them to a website such as maine.gov where they can enter their information themselves. It may be easier to guide them through the process, however that would require events and tabling which present another challenge. A challenge with community colleges and largely commuter colleges in general is the struggle with engaging students in events and activities. SMCC is no different in that it can be a real challenge to see turnout. This requires tailoring events to meet the needs and desires of the student body, which may be difficult to see results for. Another challenge that affects SMCC is that many students come from low income situations, 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, which will give students the opportunity to get to the polls if they don't have transportation. Another way of convincing people to vote is by allowing them to do so via absentee ballot, which should be heavily advocated for during the early voting period.
- **External:** 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.

Strengths:

- 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 number one goal this election cycle is to enroll into NSLVE, which the college has recently agreed to do, and is already moving forward with filing paperwork. With NSLVE we will be able to centralize our efforts in specific areas where civic engagement is below average. SMCC will also apply to be included in the All In Campus Voting Challenge, which will reward and recognize the college for its efforts in engaging its students. It is also important to implement a civic learning experience into school curriculum as it is a core piece of being successful in communities across the country. It is hoped that in these, the 2022 midterm elections, SMCC will see at least a 50% voter turnout. It is hoped that, in four years, come the 2026 midterms, SMCC will have increased its turnout to at least 70%. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to work with the school's administration to implement civic education as a core component of the 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.

Another goal is to participate in civic holidays as outlined by the Ask Every Student organization, more specifically 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.

The way we plan to achieve our goals is by allowing the Student Senate to take full responsibility for facilitating/delegating this plan. The newly formed Political Science Club will play a key role in seeing that this plan is carried out. With the Student Senate in charge of this plan, and the Political Science club as its primary subsidiary, all clubs, which span from art and nursing, to intercultural and religious, will have the opportunity to work with each other to implement this plan and ensure that students are included and engaged.

Reporting & Evaluation:

This plan will be evaluated and altered as necessary each election cycle by the Political Science Club. If the club is unable to perform this duty because it has gone inactive or is incapable in some capacity, then the duty of evaluating this plan will be delegated to a member of the Student Senate, or a member of the student body if deemed adequate for the task. The Student Senate President will also need to 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 Political Science Club will submit the action plan to the Student Senate where it will be reviewed and voted upon. If the evaluation does not pass the Senate, the plan will be reevaluated. When the plan has been approved by the Student Senate then it will be released to the public via the student portal. The Student Senate 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.

Strategy:

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. Voter Registration Day is self explanatory and will be a day of tabling to get as many students registered as possible. Voter Education Week will include tabling and other other activities with the help of the Activities Club and Res Life. Voter Education Week should be

celebrated on a minimum of three days of that week. Vote Early Day will involve tabling with 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.

Below is a timeline that details what events are planned in advance and the ideal time of the semester that they should be implemented, of course with leeway to restructure. The first event that will see a voter registration table is the New Student Orientation Days on both the South Portland campus and the Brunswick campus. This will also allow exposure to the Political Science Club which will oversee such events, and therefore students should be able to sign up for more information about the club and its role. Clubs should then identify certain faculty that will help in their efforts and help the club in getting information about voting and registration to students in their classes and departments. The Maine Youth Voting Summit should be advocated for on campus when announced by the Maine Students Vote organization. As election day nears, events such as candidate debate-watch parties and mock elections are good ways of engaging students. An effort to identify issues on the ballot should also be identified and presented to students to make them feel more connected to the election.

Activities Guide for the 2022 Election Cycle

Date	Activity
Aug 26th-27th	Voter Registration & Education at New Student Orientation
September 13th	First Campus Voting Coalition Meeting & First Faculty Champions Training
Sept 20th	National Voter Registration Day
Sept 30th	Maine Youth Voting Summit
Oct 1st	SMCC Voting Organizer Onboarded
Oct 3rd-7th	National Voter Education Week - Beach Bonfire (voter registration & education with food, games, & fun), tabling in front of Oceanview Dining Hall daily
October 15th	Second Faculty Champions & goal starting SMCC Votes
TBA	Mock Election & Candidate Forum Watching Party - participate in Maine Secretary of State Office's Gubernatorial mock election
Oct. 28th	Vote Early Day - Many SMCC students come from surrounding towns making same day voting challenging if they have classes or work on election day
Nov. 8th	ELECTION DAY - SMCC Bus to the Polls!