



SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY BOSTON

Suffolk University All-In Campus Democracy Challenge
2020 Action Plan

SuffolkVotes 2020



Section 1: Executive Summary

Background

Suffolk University was founded in Boston Massachusetts in 1906 when a young man named Gleason Archer turned the parlor in his simple Roxbury Massachusetts apartment into an evening law school. His first class consisted of nine men who could not attend any of the city's established universities or law schools – not because they lacked talent or ambition, but because they did not come from the proper social class, were not of the right ethnicity, or could not afford to enroll. Archer's accomplishment was not simply to open the door to education, but to do so in a manner that addressed the practical challenges faced by his students. A century later, the twin values of access and opportunity are still at the core of Suffolk's identity.

Access and opportunity are also at the heart of our nation's identity. America's democracy is based on the idea that every eligible American citizen has the right to vote – regardless of skin color, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, or language ability. Yet access to the polls is still very much a work in progress across the country. Suffolk University faculty and students engage in civic learning and democratic engagement activities at the international, national, state, and local levels every day, as they engage in curriculum-based activities that promote engagement with their communities, nurture and respect appreciation for diverse cultures, perspectives, and identities, and nurture partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies.

SuffolkVotes Team

The 2020 Democratic Engagement Action Plan is part of the University's overall commitment to cultivating commitment to the public good and expanding upon and enhancing the good work already happening. The 2020 Democratic Engagement Action Plan was designed by the SuffolkVotes team, a coalition of faculty, staff, and students from across the three schools on our downtown Boston campus.

- Dr. Rachael Cobb, Associate Professor and Chair, Political Science & Legal Studies, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Marc Holzer, Distinguished Professor of Public Administration, Sawyer School of Business
- Dr. Christina Kulich-Vamvakas, Instructor, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Elena Llaudet, Assistant Professor, Political Science & Legal Studies, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Robert Rosenthal, Associate Professor and Chair, Advertising and Public Relations, College of Arts and Sciences
- Adam Westbrook, Director of the Center for Community Engagement, Suffolk University
- SuffolkVotes Ambassador student leaders are currently being recruited from across the university, but specifically from identity-based student clubs like the Black Student Union, and others that work with the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion
- Jennifer Blakely, Sawyer Library
- SuffolkVotes Graduate Fellow, Jessica Mejia (new position approved to start in 2020)

- SuffolkVotes Undergraduate Student Scholar, Elizabeth Finn (new position approved to start in 2020)
- Two Law students: Mia Bonardi and Kisha Wilson
 - Informal support and guidance are consistently supplied by Registrar, Deans' Office, and Senior University Leadership

The 2020 Democratic Engagement Action Plan seeks to draw on past efforts to accomplish bold goals. Suffolk University's National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report results show that Suffolk has a student body that actively participates in voting. The Suffolk campus mobilization effort for the 2016 presidential election resulted in a 10-percentage point increase from the 2012 presidential election. Suffolk earned a silver seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge for achieving a student voting rate of 64.7 percent, which was between 60 percent and 69 percent required for silver-status. Suffolk students' high voting rates previously were recognized in a national study of learning, voting, and engagement conducted by Tufts University, which classified Suffolk as a "high-voting-rate campus." Only 90 of the more than 900 colleges and universities studied were placed in that category. In the 2018 election cycle, a university-wide committee, "SuffolkVotes" formed to strategize and coordinate student voter registration and participation. The focus of the 2020 election cycle will be to continue the successful strategies used in 2012, 2016, and 2018 but also to add additional voter registration and engagement best practices and coordinate on how to successfully mobilize in the time of global pandemic. With the 2020 election cycle, this will be the second election cycle with intentional and coordinated university wide SuffolkVotes initiatives further embedding SuffolkVotes programming and initiatives into the fabric of the university, making voter engagement an even stronger norm at Suffolk.

2020 Democratic Engagement Plan Goals

For the 2020 election cycle, we used data from the last presidential election cycle as the baseline for setting our goals:

- Increase our 2016 Voting Rate by 5.3 points, from 64.7% to **70%**
- Increase our 2016 Registration Rate by 3 points, from 87% to **90%**
- Increase our 2016 Rate of Registered Students who Voted by 5.6 points, from 74.4% to **80%**

Additional Longer-Term Goals

- Increase student voting during off-year elections by 10%
- Gather "Civic Education Impact Survey" data from all incoming first-year undergraduate students 4x a year, at the beginning and end of every semester, to discern the impact of specific classes and co-curricular experiences on student learning and engagement
- Find ways to engage students who are not eligible to vote
- Integrate SuffolkVotes website as a resource on all syllabi

The 2020 action plan has started. We have already successfully created a SuffolkVotes website on the Suffolk University site, www.suffolk.edu/suffolkvotes that provides information to students on how to register to vote, a first-time voter checklist, and information on ballot questions. We are preparing materials for all incoming students as they begin orientation in June. And we are planning events, voter guides, and materials as we look to the Massachusetts September 1 primary and the November 3 general election and beyond.

The 2020 Democratic Engagement Action Plan will be implemented on our downtown Boston campus. Suffolk University is a private, coeducational, nonsectarian urban university with more than 7,000 students enrolled in its Law School, College of Arts & Sciences, and Sawyer Business School with campuses in downtown Boston and Madrid. There are approximately 5000 undergraduate students. The Boston campus is relatively small in square footage. Four main buildings comprise the space where classes are held for all three schools. In addition, four residence halls house roughly 20% of the undergraduate population. Suffolk is primarily a commuter school. The University offers undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate degrees and certificates. Flexible academic and co-curricular programs serve traditional and nontraditional students through part-time and evening schedules, online programs, and continuing education.

Suffolk University was [recognized in 2018 as one of 100 universities that best serve the nation](#), based on social mobility, research, and service, according to *Washington Monthly* magazine.

Suffolk University's 2025 Strategic Plan calls for the creation of a new School of Public Affairs and Global Engagement that will bring together expertise from the College of Arts & Sciences, the Sawyer Business School, and Suffolk University Law School. The new school is the natural outgrowth of a University that has, for over a century, placed public service and serving the public good, at the center of everything it does. Suffolk students and alumni are public servants across Massachusetts and across the globe. The new school will emphasize experiential learning, rigorous scholarship, and community collaboration, and will engage students and advance efforts to find solutions to society's most pressing problems locally, nationally, and globally. It will be the primary home for the University's Ford Hall Forum, the nation's longest running free and open public lecture series, and the Moakley Center, which for more than 35 years has been providing education, training, and research opportunities for public servants and civic leaders. Its guiding principle will be interdisciplinary collaboration in support of the public sphere.

The creation and implementation of the School of Public Affairs and Global Engagement is intended to further unify Suffolk University in common purpose of educating for the public good. The school will emphasize interdisciplinary collaboration; it will develop additional curricular requirements that will emphasize widespread civic participation, civic engagement, and service learning, and it will encourage what Nancy Thomas and Margaret Brower refer to as

“pervasive political discussions,” in which classrooms across campus and across the curriculum will serve as critical venues for political discussions and awareness.¹

Ultimately, with the creation of the new school, our goal is to get to a 90% voting rate in the next 10 years. Moreover, long-term, the goal is to further good work already underway providing for a campus culture that celebrates diversity, cares for the *whole student*, including supporting mental health, mitigating food insecurity, nourishing the intellectual, social, and political life of all students, helping them become effective, empathic, and generous citizens of the world.

The SuffolkVotes team will revisit the Action Plan at the end of the 2020/2021 academic year and add further material based on assessments of the past year.

The SuffolkVotes efforts will be implemented by the SuffolkVotes Committee. It is truly a collaborative effort with leadership provided by Rachael Cobb, chair of the Political Science & Legal Studies department and co-interim dean of the School of Public Affairs and Global Engagement and Adam Westbrook, Director of the Center for Community Engagement.

Section 2: Leadership

The SuffolkVotes team is comprised of a university-wide interdisciplinary committee including faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences and Sawyer Business School, students from Suffolk Law School, university-level stakeholders including representatives from the Sawyer Library, Center for Community Engagement, and students.

The group will meet *at least monthly* beginning in June 2020.

ALL-IN Challenge Points of Contact

- Dr. Rachael Cobb, Associate Professor and Chair, Political Science & Legal Studies, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and co-interim Dean of the new School of Public Affairs and Global Engagement
 - Chairs largest department in CAS with 650 majors.
 - Founded and oversees University Pollworkers Project, designed to recruit students to serve as poll workers
 - Teaches two election-oriented classes, including *Voting Rights & Election Law and Elections in Real Time* with Dr. Robert Rosenthal, also a member of this committee
 - With committee member Dr. Christina Kulich-Vamvakas, started first civics class at Suffolk, *Rules of Civic Engagement*, a 1-credit class designed to introduce any student to foundational citizenship skills

¹ Thomas, Nancy, and Margaret Brower. 2017. “Politics 365: Fostering Campus Climates for Student Political Learning and Engagement.” In *Teaching Civic Engagement across the Disciplines*, American Political Science Association Washington, DC, 361–374.

- Adam Westbrook, Director of the Center for Community Engagement, Suffolk University (from the Division of Student Affairs)
 - The Center for Community Engagement (CCE) works with faculty as they develop service-learning curriculum; collaborates with divisions, departments and schools across campus; and coordinates service-learning activities among undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Arts & Sciences and Sawyer Business School.
 - The CCE organizes and runs all voter registration on campus; CCE organizes and runs the majority of information sessions on how to register/vote; CCE organizes voter mobilization activities during Early Voting and Election Day and hosts an Election Day Party.

Faculty

- Dr. Marc Holzer, Distinguished Professor of Public Administration, Sawyer School of Business, Institute for Public Service
 - Executive Director of the National Center for Public Performance at the Institute for Public Service at Suffolk University
 - Led and compiled development of downloadable e-book, *Democracy, Voting & Civic Duty: Motivating Quotations on Individual & Collective Responsibility*
- Dr. Christina Kulich-Vamvakas, Instructor, Political Science & Legal Studies, College of Arts and Sciences
 - Oversees and teaches experiential learning classes in Political Science Department, including all internship classes and a semester-long Congressional simulation
 - With committee member Dr. Rachael Cobb, started first Civics class at Suffolk, *Rules of Civic Engagement*, a 1-credit class designed to introduce any student to foundational citizenship skills
- Dr. Elena Llaudet, Assistant Professor, Political Science & Legal Studies, College of Arts and Sciences
 - Teaches required Data Analysis class in Political Science & Legal Studies department
 - Area of research focuses on voter mobilization and best practices for designing student teams to promote learning
- Dr. Robert Rosenthal, Associate Professor and Chair, Advertising and Public Relations, College of Arts and Sciences
 - Specialization in political communication Directs social media strategy.
 - With committee member Dr. Rachael Cobb, teaches *Election in Real Time* a class designed to help students understand the presidential election process, engage with media coverage, and develop student critical thinking.

Staff

- Jennifer Blakely, Head of Access Services, Suffolk University Sawyer Library

Students

- SuffolkVotes Graduate Fellow, Jessica Mejia (new position approved to start in 2020)
- Mia Bonardi, 2L, Suffolk Law School
 - Member of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, Representative to Women’s Law Association
- Kisha Wilson, 3L, Suffolk Law School Evening program
 - President, Student Peace and Reconciliation Coalition
- SuffolkVotes Ambassador student leaders are currently being recruited from across the university, but specifically from identity-based student clubs including the Black Student Union, and others that work with the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion

Senior Leadership

- Support and guidance are consistently, graciously, and eagerly supplied by the University Registrar, Deans’ Offices, Office of Media and Communications, and Senior University Leadership including funding from the Provost’s office.

Additional Assistance

- With significant overlap in topic and membership, the *Faculty & Professional Learning Community (FPLC)*, “Teaching Civics Across the University,” led by Rachael Cobb, Adam Westbrook also includes Christina Kulich-Vamvakas (PSLS), Peter Burn (Biology), Bryan Trabold (English), Julia Howington (Suffolk University Moakley Archives), and Sonia Didriksson, Senior Reference and Instruction Librarian.
- This committee is designing the “Civic Education Impact Survey” that will be distributed to all first-year students via the First Year Writing program, a required sequence of classes for *all* undergraduate students in both the College and the Business School.

SuffolkVotes will coordinate voter registration, education and turnout efforts in 2020. The committee also engages with student groups across the three schools to assist in these efforts. Suffolk University already has a strong long-standing relationship with the Boston Election Department through our work on the Suffolk-based University Pollworkers Project. In addition, Suffolk University has a strong relationship with MassVOTE, a Massachusetts organization dedicated to mobilizing historically underrepresented communities. MassVOTE routinely conducts voter education programs at Suffolk, helping students learn how to register to vote and fostering life-long civic engagement. MassVOTE is part of the Election Modernization Coalition, that includes Common Cause, the League of Women Voters, the ACLU, MassPIRG, among other citizen organizations. All of these organizations have connections with Suffolk and in a variety of ways and work with Suffolk

This year, Rachael Cobb will teach a special class, “Poll Worker 101,” designed to recruit students to serve as poll workers across the country to address an expected dramatic shortage of poll workers in the upcoming election due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. The Boston

Election Department has committed to providing additional assistance during orientation for staffing voter registration tables, whether in person or virtually.

Section 3: Commitment

Institutional Commitment to Improving Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

Suffolk University's founding in 1906 occurred because of Gleason Archer's concern for community members. Service and the concept of strengthening communities is an integral part of the University's identity. The University's 2025 strategic plan calls for "solidifying our historic strengths in civic engagement and public service." The Strategic Plan calls for a major investment by creating a new school of public affairs designed to "solidify our historic strength in this field and give us a more visible platform to launch new programs ... align[ing] with our commitments to community, civil discourse, and to the promotion of programs relevant to the 21st century marketplace." The plan also calls for a major emphasis on civil discourse, civic engagement, and service learning and has brought together stakeholders from all three existing schools to develop coordinated programming toward this end.

Today, several centers, institutes, and programs that are outward facing and known well to external stakeholders and the general public work to benefit the public good, including the Center for Community Engagement, the Institute for Public Service, the Moakley Center for Public Management, the Center for Restorative Justice, the Suffolk University Political Research Center (the Suffolk University Poll, led by David Paleologos), the Ford Hall Forum at Suffolk University--the nation's longest running free lecture series open to the community, along with a robust set of clinical programs at the Law School. The clinical programs provide legal services to underserved populations and experiential learning to students. Eleven clinics are administered by 27 faculty and staff. New clinics include the New England Innocence Project and the Housing Discrimination Testing Program, which focuses on eliminating housing discrimination in the Boston metro area. The Office of Professional & Career Development, with five faculty and one FTE, supports students interested in public service, administers government and public interest internship programs, and manages the Pro Bono Program. All of these centers and programs are front and center in public talks, on the University website, and noted in the many media contributions faculty and staff make regularly.

Civic Learning and Democratic Learning as Pervasive Part of Institutional Culture

Educating for civic learning is part of the DNA of Suffolk University and is pervasive across all three schools. Not only are various institutes, centers, and programs dedicated to civic learning, so too are multiple academic programs and departments.

- The University Service-Learning Committee was created in 2015 to institutionalize and recognize courses that use service-learning pedagogy. This committee created a university-wide definition of service-learning used to designate and institutionalize

service-learning as an experiential learning pedagogy. As of the writing of the application, 16 courses are officially designated as “service-learning” courses at Suffolk.

- Since 2010, the Sawyer Business School created the Local and Global Engagement requirement to ensure that every undergraduate student in School complete 20 hours of community engagement with critical reflection
- The Center for Community Engagement adopted the Carnegie Classification definition of community engagement, which focuses on the “mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.”
- Two Faculty and Professional Learning Communities (FPLCs) are dedicated to service-learning and civic engagement at Suffolk, led by both a faculty and staff member, helping to institutionalize service-learning and civic engagement across the academic and co-curricular areas of the university
- The Suffolk Law School has legal clinics, which support underserved populations and law student community engagement programs, including the Housing Discrimination legal clinic, which serves underserved populations, and focuses on eliminating housing discrimination in Boston metro area. The Law School has also created and hired a Director of Student Engagement and Inclusion to build up more student community engagement at the Law School.
- In the Sawyer Business School, the Institute for Public Service and Moakley Center for Public Management work together to foster public discourse, support and advise community organizations, and provide educational opportunities for public service managers
- The Political Science & Legal Studies department has created Campaign Lab, a class designed to help first-time candidates and campaign managers
- The Sociology department’s Center for Restorative Justice offers trainings and events on applications of restorative justice.
- The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, with a staff of five FTE, was created in 2013 and collects and uses data to support institutional planning, policy formation, and evaluation of institutional effectiveness, including on community engagement initiatives.

Mission Statements

Suffolk University Mission Statement: At Suffolk University we are driven by the power of education, inclusion, and engagement to change lives and positively impact communities. Committed to excellence, we provide students with experiential and transformational learning opportunities that begin in the center of Boston, reach across the globe, and lead to extraordinary outcomes for our graduates.

The University’s updated mission includes, as two of its eight core values, community engagement and social responsibility.

Community Engagement: Suffolk University actively promotes relationships with the community to exchange knowledge and provide pathways for internships, career development,

and job placement. We engage with our students, alumni, and the broader community in collaborative relationships that promote local and global connections enhancing learning and scholarship.

Social Responsibility: Suffolk University believes in the integration of civic engagement and service learning throughout the curriculum to foster the development of responsible global citizens. We are committed to acting ethically, professionally, and collaboratively.

Sawyer Business School

“The Sawyer Business School provides students a world-class business and public service education. Suffolk’s engaged faculty leverages a central Boston location and fosters collaborations with local, national, and global community partners to generate high-quality scholarship and enhance the integration of classroom lessons with experiential learning. In doing so, we graduate global-minded, knowledgeable, and socially responsible professionals who embrace innovation and change.”

College of Arts & Sciences (CAS)

The College describes among its goals:

- “To provide opportunities for students to enhance their aesthetic, intellectual, and moral capabilities, and their sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and civic responsibility”
- “To attract and maintain an excellent faculty with a commitment to teaching, research and service to the university and the greater community”

Suffolk University Law School

Mission: “Suffolk University Law School, located in Boston, is dedicated to welcoming students from all backgrounds and circumstances and educating them to become highly skilled and ethical lawyers who are well prepared to serve in their local communities, across the nation, and around the world...the Law School seeks to develop in its students the skills necessary to serve the profession's changing needs in an increasingly diverse, global, and technologically dependent society. ... by providing students with a core foundation in legal education, a breadth of courses and programs, and excellent training by a diverse and accessible faculty engaged in scholarship and service to their profession and communities. Suffolk's goal is to provide its students with access to an excellent legal education, inspire a commitment to justice....”

Learning Outcomes

In 2014, The Sawyer School of Business and the College of Arts and Sciences established the first shared general education curriculum between the two schools. Among the six shared requirements is the, “Social, Cultural, and Global Perspectives” requirement – a class that helps students “understand the mechanisms through which social, cultural or global differences are perceived, understood and constructed; understand the relationships among conflicts, social, cultural or global differences, and power within the changing historical and cultural contexts;

and asks students to analyze how convergent or conflicting perspectives of diverse communities influence change within a social, cultural or global context.” The Sawyer School of Business offers a class that meets this requirement called *Social Change* which

In addition, the College of Arts and Sciences lists, as one of its core learning outcomes, the understanding of “Social Phenomena” in which students “understand the interactions and relationships among people, institutions and the social environment.” In addition, the College has an Ethics learning outcome that states that “students will be aware of key concepts in ethics and philosophical reasoning and will use critical thinking to apply these concepts in order to evaluate situations and controversies.”

To assess the degree to which these learning outcomes are met, Suffolk participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) a nationally benchmarked survey administered to freshmen and seniors collecting information on the undergraduate experience.

Co-Curricular Opportunities that Educate for Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

One of Suffolk University’s core values is “community engagement,” which includes both curricular and cocurricular programming.

Among the many co-curricular opportunities, Suffolk Law School offers **the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project** which empowers high school students to be responsible citizens and participants in the democratic process. Each year, law students accepted into the yearlong program study constitutional law and simultaneously teach it to Boston-area high school students in urban minority-majority population areas. These Marshall-Brennan Fellows also enroll in a weekly seminar course, Constitutional Justice in School, which focuses on constitutional law for high school students, including free speech for students, separation of church and school, search and seizure in school, equal protection against race discrimination, and due process. The weekly seminar affords fellows the opportunity to explore pedagogical problems in teaching constitutional law. As part of the teaching experience, fellows also prepare the high school students for a regional moot court competition. The winners of the regional competition are invited to compete in the national Marshall-Brennan Moot Court Competition.

Jumpstart places highly motivated Suffolk students in preschool classrooms in low-income communities to help children build language, literacy, and social skills. A yearlong program with a focus on school success, family involvement, and future teachers, Jumpstart works to create an environment of lifelong learning for children. Jumpstart at Suffolk recruits student corps members who commit to performing 300 hours of service during the year. Each student receives more than 60 hours of professional training on topics related to early childhood education and citizenship during their term of service.

Launched in 2018, the **Suffolk CARES Pantry** aims to fight food insecurity among Suffolk students. Suffolk CARES, in collaboration with student groups and University offices, holds

monthly donation drives to help stock the pantry. Students and staff may drop off non-perishable items in the Suffolk CARES donation bins located in the lobby of every academic building. Since its launch, the pantry has been visited 268 times by 66 different students.

Students who volunteer for Suffolk CARES help stock and manage the pantry and set up food and materials drives on campus. Student and staff volunteers help support the Student Affairs staff who are responsible for the pantry. Since the pantry is new, and the focus has been on stocking it due to the rising need on campus, formalized reflection has not yet been a part of the volunteer experience. However, the Division of Student Affairs has begun a process in the 2018-19 year to train staff on Kolb's theory of Experiential Learning so that the learning cycle, including reflection, can be incorporated into all student experiences, including the Suffolk Cares pantry volunteer program.

The **Suffolk Law Immigration Clinic** program partnered with the Dean of Students' Office in the 2017-18 year to present information sessions for Suffolk international students who have had questions and concerns related to immigration executive orders.

The Center for Community Engagement's Alternative Spring Break program began in 2000 with 12 students who engaged in meaningful service during their spring break week. During the 2017-2018 academic year, 92 students participated, learning and serving with communities in eight different areas of the country, including Meridian, Mississippi; Gulfport, Mississippi; Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona; Denver, Colorado; Washington, DC.; South Bend, Indiana; Bel Air, Maryland; and Clarksville, Georgia.

The Center for Community Engagement's Alternative Winter Break program works in partnership with **Habitat for Humanity International's Global Village program** and consists of international community engagement programs in East Asia. Since its inception in 2006, staff and students have traveled to either Central America or Southeast Asia to work with Habitat for Humanity International's Global Village Program and other community partner organizations, while also delving into the host area's culture. The program is open to all Suffolk students. Accepted students are required to enroll in a spring semester course that reviews the region's crucial political and economic events.

Students spend 12 days immersed in the political, social, and economic milieu of their respective regions while participating in a Habitat for Humanity project focused on affordable housing and poverty relief. Students are enrolled in "GVT 387-Conflict and Development in Asia," a 4-credit spring semester course that reviews crucial political and economic events in the region, processes of reconstruction of the rule of law, plus democracy and sustainable development.

The program has consistently provided students with experience and skills in several of domains, including critical thinking, leadership development, and cross-cultural competency. Students engage in formal and informal reflection on political and social observations and personal experiences while in the host country.

During the 2017-2018 academic year, nine students and two staff/faculty traveled to Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, Cambodia to learn and serve in a country that is working to build community after experiencing crimes against humanity in the late 20th Century. In 2019, the program expanded to offer two programs—one in Cambodia and one in Myanmar. Each trip included 10 undergraduate and graduate students, as well as two faculty and staff advisers.

The Center for Community Engagement offers a variety of **community engagement leadership opportunities**. Roles include organizing and planning ongoing community service projects, developing relationships with Greater Boston organizations, supporting service-learning projects, and creating new or improving existing programs. These roles include service scholars, graduate fellows, and project leaders. Three scholar positions are available in the center: community partnerships scholar, communications scholar, and the campus leadership and engagement scholar.

Section 4: Landscape

Suffolk University’s commitment to nurturing and improving democratic engagement is at the center of what the university does across all three schools. Data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) shows that that Suffolk University students are more likely to be registered to vote than their peers nationally. Table 1 summarizes Suffolk student voter registration and turnout rates, 2012-2016. In the most recent presidential election, Suffolk University voter turnout, 64.7 percent, was 16.4 points higher than the national student voting rate of 48.3 percent. The Suffolk campus mobilization effort for the 2016 presidential election resulted in a 10-percentage point increase from the 2012 presidential election. Suffolk earned a silver seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge for achieving a student voting rate between 60 percent and 69 percent. Suffolk students’ high voting rates previously were recognized in a national study of learning, voting, and engagement conducted by Tufts University, which classified Suffolk as a “high-voting-rate campus.” Only 90 of the more than 900 colleges and universities studied were placed in that category.

Table 1: Suffolk University Voter Registration and Turnout Rates, 2012-2018

	Student Voter Registration Rates		Student Voter Turnout Rates	
	Suffolk	National	Suffolk	National
2012	78.9%	69.0%	54.7%	45.1%
2014	62.9%	62.1%	22.9%	17.9%
2016	87.0%	70.6%	64.7%	48.3%
2018	65.5%	75%	36.5%	29.1%

Source: National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 reports.

Our 2016 NSLVE data showed lower turnout rates among several student groups of color in relation to turnout in Suffolk's white student population (57%). In particular, Asian student turnout rate was 31.3%, and Hispanic student turnout was 48.1%. Recruitment is currently underway to engage student affinity-based groups at Suffolk from these two groups of students at Suffolk, including the Asian-American Association, Chinese Student and Scholar Association, Japanese Student Association, Suffolk University LatinX Association, Taiwanese Student Association, and several other affinity groups on campus.

In addition, our NSLVE data show that certain fields of study have lower overall participation rates, particularly Engineering and Engineering and Technology, the Physical Sciences, and the Humanities.

In the next section we detail our goals that takes these challenges into consideration.

Section 5: Goals

Suffolk University's long-term goal is to increase student voter registration rates to above 80 percent and to increase student voter turnout rates to above 70 percent in presidential election years and to increase student voter turnout rates to above 40 percent for mid-term election years. Moreover, going forward, we want to increase student voting in municipal elections and create a campus where everyone who can vote does vote.

For the 2020 election cycle, we used data from the last presidential election cycle (2016) as the baseline for setting our 2020 goals:

- Increase our 2016 Voting Rate by 5.3 points, from 64.7% to **70%**
- Increase our 2016 Registration Rate by 3 points, from 87% to **90%**
- Increase our 2016 Rate of Registered Students who Voted by 5.6 points, from 74.4% to **80%**
- Increase our 2016 Rate of Registered students of color who Voted by **10 points** in each race/ethnicity category (e.g. Asian, American Indian/Native Alaskan, Black, Hispanic, 2 or more races).
- Increase the Rate of Registered students who vote among low participation fields of study (Engineering, Humanities, Physical Sciences), from a low of 37% to **45%** across all three.

Additional Longer-Term Goals

- Increase student voting during off-year elections by 10%
- Gather "Civic Education Impact Survey" data from all incoming first-year undergraduate students 4x a year, at the beginning and end of every semester, to discern the impact of specific classes and co-curricular experiences on student learning and engagement; identify high-impact classes, practices, experiences and then, if possible, expand those experiences where needed

- Find meaningful ways to engage students who are not eligible to vote in multiple democratic engagement activities
- Integrate SuffolkVotes website as a resource on all syllabi
- Get students of color voter registration and turnout rates equal or above those of their white student counterparts through increased intentional recruitment in voter engagement activities and leadership opportunities including SuffolkVotes Ambassadors program and SuffolkVotes Committee.
- Create a 1-credit “civics” requirement for all students modeled after the elective class already offered, *Rules of Civic Engagement*, a 1-credit class designed to introduce any student to foundational citizenship skills.
- Nurture a newspaper reading culture of engagement with facts, information, knowledge of community activities. Work with the library and local/national newspapers to offer every student a free or affordable subscription to multiple newspapers.

Section 6: Strategy

Voter Registration and Engagement Activities

- Class raps program, in which student volunteers will visit classes and make brief presentations on how to register to vote at the beginning of each semester starting in the Fall 2020, with the goal of making this a regular practice at Suffolk each semester.
- Voter registration efforts, including an online video will be included in all virtual new student orientation sessions for all transfer, undergraduate and graduate students. Follow-up with students after such session to ensure that registration leads to voting.
- Creation of an additional summer session Poll Workers course for students to train, participate, and work the polls on election day. This class is normally offered every fall in even-numbered years at Suffolk and is taught by SuffolkVotes Chair, Prof. Rachael Cobb. This is the first year that a summer session course will be added to encourage more students to become poll workers.
- This year, Suffolk worked with the Registrar to get a voter registration button put onto the course registration page that every student at Suffolk uses to register for classes each semester.
- Develop FAQ about student voting available at all tables
- Use the Silver-Seal from the All-In Campus Challenge to let students know that Suffolk University students vote at high-rates and invite new students to be part of a community of voters
- Support students’ registration and absentee voting by covering the cost of postage to mail forms and ballots
- Publicize and participate in National Voter Registration Day, National Vote Early Day, and SLSV’s Voter Education Week once details and resources emerge.
- Print and distribute “check your voter registration status” cards and flyers

- Publicize key dates and reminders, including voter registration deadlines, early voting information, places to turn for information
- Table-Tuesdays and T-Shirt Tuesdays, in which, beginning in mid-September through October, every Tuesday, students will “table” in “high-traffic” areas with voter registration information. Budget permitting, all students who come to the voter registration table will get t-shirts and all members of the campus community will be encouraged to wear their voting t-shirts on Tuesdays in the fall.
- This year, Suffolk created a SuffolkVotes website (suffolk.edu/suffolkvotes) that contains information on how to register to vote, how to get involved, and other resources for students. This new website communicates institutional support for voter engagement and provides a landing place for student voter information and ways to get involved.
- Voter registration video — in the Spring 2020, the Chair of SuffolkVotes and several SuffolkVotes Student Ambassadors worked with the Office of Marketing and Communication to create a brief information video featuring Suffolk students, about how to register to vote, how to vote absentee, how to locate a polling location, answer questions about early voting, etc. This video is now on the SuffolkVotes webpage.
- Create and run a voter registration and engagement video at each of 8 new student virtual orientation sessions in June, and late August.
- Implement a direct-message Social Media strategy to inform and motivate students targeting networks such as Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, and Facebook.
- Implement a press strategy, making select faculty and student leaders available to campus media (print, online, television, radio) for interviews about the voter registration drive and the election.

Beyond Registration Activities

- Host two campus-wide information forums on important issues shaping the 2020 elections; publicize widely
- Promote other campus-wide events related to the 2020 election, including speeches, class visits, etc. and ensure publicity and general excitement
- Create booklets with memorable quotes on democracy to educate students about what democracy is and how to ensure its continuation
- Recruit students to serve as poll workers as part of the existing collaboration with the Boston Election Department, the Suffolk University Pollworkers Project, including an additional course offered in the Summer 2020 term.
- Teach classes with specific focus on voting, engaging
- Assist with ongoing research projects as occurred in the 2016 election in which students engaged in polling-place observations as part of a larger research project led by Dr. Christopher Mann at Skidmore College
- “Make a Voting Plan” activities for students to commit to how they will vote (mail, absentee, in-person) where they will vote, when they will vote, promises to vote, etc.
- Election Day pins/stickers (create virtual pins for this, if university community is still virtual)
- Organized walks to polling places for students in dorms, if safety permits

Section 7: Reporting

In addition to being shared with All-In Campus Democracy Challenge, the Action Plan will be shared publicly on our newly created SuffolkVotes website at suffolk.edu/suffolkvotes. Once submitted, our Civic Action Plan will be accessible and advertised to all community and external partners as well as internal faculty and staff stakeholders at Suffolk. In addition, Suffolk's NSLVE reports are currently publicly available on the SuffolkVotes site. I.

Section 8: Evaluation

We want to know what works – we want to know what classes are high-impact classes in terms of promoting democratic engagement, a sense of self-efficacy, and promoting voting. We want to know what experiences have these outcomes. This information will enable us to improve our democratic engagement activities, coordinate more, and integrate such information into curricular decisions. The major effort, toward this end, is the assessment work being conducted by the Civics Faculty and Professional Learning Committee. This committee has partnered with Suffolk's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to include a "Civic Education Impact Survey" pre- and post-semester on each student's course portal (Blackboard) for students to take prior to the start of the fall semester, and again at the end of the fall semester. We will track which students are participating in our events (and many other activities/classes) to assess whether participation in SuffolkVotes activities results in positive change of students' political knowledge and efficacy.

SuffolkVotes will also evaluate the effectiveness of our strategies with some simple measures:

Quantitative Measures

- Number of activities held and number of attendees
- Number of faculty, staff and students trained
- Number of students participating as poll workers in the City of Boston
- Numbers of students registered, and that commit to voting will be collected at each event and program
- Student Voter turnout post-election via NSLVE report. Special attention will be paid to increases in voter registration and turnout for our populations of students of color to inform the following year's program strategy.

Qualitative Measures

- Feedback from the SuffolkVotes team before, during, and after fall programming. The committee will meet at least monthly, starting in June to plan, execute and reflect on programming operations, successes, and to adjust our strategy to incorporate learnings gained during the process.

- Feedback from faculty, staff and students via surveys after major events/programs. We

We will conduct a full evaluation with all data after the 2020 elections and use the data, along with information from our next NSLVE report to evaluate our success. We will write a report and share this with our administration partners, including the President, the Provost, and all deans. We will also share widely with faculty and students.