



SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY BOSTON

Suffolk University All-In Campus Democracy Challenge
2020 Action Plan

SuffolkVotes 2020



Section 1: Executive Summary

The twin values of access and opportunity are the core of the Suffolk University identity. Suffolk University strives to provide students with access to rich educational opportunities while also promoting and fostering civic engagement to develop responsible global citizens. Suffolk University includes the College of Arts and Sciences, the Sawyer Business School and Suffolk University Law School. Suffolk University's National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report results show that Suffolk has a student body that participates actively 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, "Suffolk Votes" formed to strategize and coordinate student voter registration and participation. In 2018, Suffolk University was again awarded the silver seal from the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge for its voter participation of 36.5%. The focus of the 2020 election cycle will be to continue the successful strategies used in 2012, 2016, and 2018 but also add some additional activities.

Section 2: Leadership

The SuffolkVotes team is comprised of is a university-wide interdisciplinary committee:

- Dr. Rachael Cobb, Associate Professor and Chair, Government
- 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, Government, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Robert Rosenthal, Associate Professor and Chair, Advertising and Public Relations
- Adam Westbrook, Director of the Center for Community Engagement, Suffolk University
- Students (to be named)
- Still need person from law school

SuffolkVotes will coordinate voter registration, education and turnout efforts in 2020. The committee is also engaging with student groups across the three schools to assist in these efforts. Suffolk University already has a strong working relationship with the Boston Election Department through our work on the Suffolk University Pollworkers Project. The Election Department has committed to providing additional assistance during orientation for staffing voter registration tables.

SuffolkVotes will meet regularly throughout spring 2020 and the fall.

Section 3: Commitment and Landscape

Suffolk University is committed to civic learning and democratic engagement. The University's mission statement 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.

The campus climate fosters civic learning and democratic engagement. Multiple majors, degree programs, and other academic credentials incorporate civic learning into their foci. The Center for Community Engagement (CCE) works with the Sawyer Business School and the College of Arts and Sciences to oversee community engagement opportunities and volunteer opportunities. CEE collaborates with faculty to incorporate service learning into their courses. Suffolk Law School's clinical programs provide experiential learning offerings to its law students and public interest legal fellowships encourage the value of public interest law.

Suffolk's geographic location in the heart of downtown Boston, steps away from the Massachusetts State House, gives students many opportunities to participate in government and public service.

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.

Section 4: 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.

Section 5: Strategy

Voter Registration Activities

- Voter registration efforts to include all new student orientation sessions for all transfer, undergraduate and graduate students. Follow-up with students after such sessions to ensure that registration leads to voting.
- 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
- 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, there will be t-shirts available at voter registration tables to all members of the campus community. Students receiving t-shirts will be encouraged to wear their voting t-shirts on Tuesdays to raise awareness campaign of voter engagement and elections.

- Class Visits, in which student volunteers will visit classes and make brief presentations to classes on how to register to vote, and also register students during this time
- Voter registration video — time and budget permitting, we will 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.
- Implement a direct-message Social Media strategy to inform and motivate students targeting networks such as 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
- 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
- Activity opportunities for students to write down where they will vote, when they will vote, promises to vote, etc.
- Election Day pins/stickers
- Organized walks to polling places for students in residence halls

Section 6: Reporting

The Action Plan will be shared internally with faculty and administrators.

Section 7: Evaluation

SuffolkVotes will evaluate the effectiveness of its strategies.

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

- NSLVE report that will show voter registration and turnout rates

Qualitative Measures

- Feedback from the SuffolkVotes team
- Feedback from faculty, staff and students via surveys
- Critical reflection with Suffolk Votes Student Ambassadors

Calendar of Events