



## Suffolk University 2022 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Rachael Cobb

### **Executive Summary:**

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Suffolk University in Massachusetts for the 2022 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2022 midterm election. The goals for Suffolk University for the 2022 election are:  
Increase student voting rate in midterm election from 35.2 in 2018 to 40 in 2022.

### **Leadership:**

Our leadership team includes the following:

Rachael Cobb - Associate Professor and Chair, Political Science & Legal Studies  
Adam Westbrook - Director, Center for Community Engagement  
Professor Renée Landers, Suffolk Law School  
Professor John Infranca, Suffolk Law School  
Jamie Bondar Director, Tutoring & Peer-to-Peer Success Services Center for Learning & Academic Success  
Kathleen Peets, Senior Director, Creative Services, University Marketing  
Theresa Doherty, Orientation  
Professor Elena Llaudet, Political Science & Legal Studies  
Professor Christina Kulich, Political Science & Legal Studies  
Professor Bob Rosenthal, Advertising, Public Relations and Social Media  
Jennifer Blakely Assistant Director for Operations and Strategic Outcomes Sawyer Library  
Students Syeeda Rahman and Steven Murnane

Our campus works with these following nonprofit partners: Ask Every Student, Campus Compact.

### **Commitment:**

Suffolk University has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2020. Our President, Marisa Kelly, signed the [Higher Education Presidents' Commitment](#) again in 2022.

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

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.

**Landscape:**

Suffolk University is a private 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2016.

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Suffolk University has 6,830 students.  
 Undergraduate enrollment 2021: 4271  
 Graduate enrollment: 898  
 Law School: 1083  
 67% live off-campus

2020 Enrollment Facts (latest data available)

American Indian or Alaska Native	11	0%
Asian	496	7%
Black or African American	422	6%
Hispanic	826	12%
International	1037	15%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0%
Unknown	216	3%
White	3669	54%
2 or more races	154	2%

Suffolk University has authorized NSLVE.

Our institution had a 2020 campus voting rate of 58.1%.  
Our institution had a 2020 voter registration rate of 68.9%.

Our institution had a 2018 voter turnout rate of 35.2%.  
Our institution had a 2018 voter registration rate of 65%.

Our institution has been recognized in the past by ALL IN for these awards: 2020 Boston Votes Best Action Plan - 4-year Institution (tied)

Our institution has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals: 2016 Silver, 2018 Silver, 2020 Bronze

### **Goals:**

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

Increase student voter rate to 40% in 2022 and 65% in 2024

Increase student voter registration rate to 60% in 2018 and 90% in 2024.

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.

### **Strategy:**

Suffolk University will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

Major strategy: class visits and voter registration tables EVERY Tuesday and Thursday, September through October.

In addition — work with registrar to send reminders to all students about making a plan to vote, voter registration deadline, early voting beginning, reminder of Election Day.

Additional strategies: students design voter information guides, ballot explanation guides; hold office hours to answer questions about voting; work with Suffolk Journal (school newspaper) to post newspaper articles about voting; President of Suffolk celebrate voting at Suffolk and promote the work of Suffolk Votes.

### **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.
- Develop FAQ about student voting available at all tables
- 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.
- Use SuffolkVotes website (suffolk.edu/suffolkvotes) that contains information on how to register to vote, how to get involved, and other resources for students. Communicates institutional support for voter engagement and provides a landing place for student voter information and ways to get involved.
- 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 2022 elections; publicize widely
- Promote other campus-wide events related to the 2022 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
- “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

### **Evaluation:**

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

The main metric will be voter registration and turnout. In addition, metrics of number of class visits made, number of students touched/contacted through that effort.

### **Reporting:**

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN’s website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/suffolk-university-boston/>.

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

NSLVE report shared with leaders of Suffolk Votes, provosts, president, deans (academic and student affairs), and department chairs.

Also posted on Suffolk Votes website, [www.suffolk.edu/suffolkvotes](http://www.suffolk.edu/suffolkvotes)