



University of Southern Maine

Campus Voting Action Plan 2024

Executive Summary

This action plan was developed in September 2024 by Brandon Rogers-Reed (Coordinator of Student Engagement And Leadership), Bee Mustafa, Emilia Toth, and Olivia Dufour (USM Election Engagement Fellows) in partnership with Maine Students Vote (Allyson Gardner), and the University of Southern Maine (USM) to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at the University of Southern Maine. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over the next few years on and around our campuses in Portland, Gorham, and Lewiston/Auburn, Maine. This plan will be implemented by several leadership coordinators and stakeholders to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize USM's commitment to civic learning, election engagement, and youth participation in local government. The Office of Student Engagement And Leadership will provide staff and resources in partnership with Maine Students Vote to ensure the success of this plan.

Leadership and Stakeholders

Name:	Role:	Contact Information
Brandon Rogers-Reed	Coordinator of Student Engagement And Leadership	brandon.reed@maine.edu
Emilia Toth	Election Engagement Fellow - Maine Students Vote	emilia.toth@maine.edu
Bee Mustafa	Election Engagement Fellow - Maine Students Vote	balkisa.mustafa@maine.edu



Olivia Dufour	Election Engagement Fellow - Maine Students Vote	olivia.dufour@maine.edu
Allyson Gardner	Director of Maine Students Vote	allyson@mainestudentsvote.org
Sloane Justice-Rose	Community Engagement Specialist	sloanerose@maine.edu
Christine O'Brian	Assistant Director of Student Engagement And Leadership	christine.obrian@maine.edu
Jaqueline Edmondson	President of the University of Southern Maine	jacqueline.edmondson@maine.edu

Succession Plan

The University of Southern Maine is committed to ensuring that our work on civic and election engagement is not hindered by changes in staff or circumstances. One tactic used to solidify this is the meticulous documentation of our efforts, which is kept in a shared digital folder. This central location allows any new team members to see what work has been done in the past and what goals still remain for the future. Additionally, we would like to look into adding “Assists with yearly election engagement” to the roles and responsibilities of our team members. This will ensure a commitment and responsibility for future team members toward election engagement efforts.

Commitment

In 2019, University of Southern Maine’s former President Cummings introduced a 10th Institutional goal in addition to the nine previously existing goals, which focused mainly on



student success, academic excellence, enrollment, and financial stability. The tenth goal “focuses squarely on equity and justice.” Additionally, the University recently adopted a Social Justice Minor to aid in these efforts. These concrete commitments show the University’s dedication to equity, justice, and civic engagement both now and in the future.

Additionally, the Office of Student Engagement And Leadership is strengthening its relationship with the Office of Community Engagement to increase access to resources on campus and bolster communication with USM administration. This relationship will foster a greater community of staff and administrators to help facilitate election engagement efforts.

Our campus and its leadership demonstrates commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement in the following ways:

- USM’s last president, Glenn Cummings, and USM’s current president, Jacqueline Edmondson, have both signed ALL IN’s Presidential Commitment. This trend shows a continual dedication from senior leadership to informing and engaging with students on elections.
- The addition of the 10th goal, as well as the Social Justice Minor demonstrates the University’s commitment to equity, justice, and civic engagement.
- The Office of Student Engagement And Leadership is dedicated to providing resources and staff for election engagement efforts
 - For example, in 2020, the University’s Student Engagement and Leadership team provided bikes for students to ride to the polls, as Covid prevented the opportunity to provide bus transportation (though buses were available in previous years).
- The University is working on classes/training/courses that teach civic and democratic learning and engagement for all students.

In classrooms or within students groups on campus we’ve seen the following resources:

- Student engagement with Maine youth organizations such as Maine Students Vote, Maine People’s Alliance, the League of Women Voters Maine, and Maine Youth Power.
- Student-led voter registration drives and class voting presentations.



- Tabling events for voting resources on both the Gorham and Portland campuses.
- Student-organized election day events.

Landscape

The University of Southern Maine's 2022 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) Report can be found via this [link](#).

One of the key differences highlighted in the 2022 report is the voter turnout between midterm and presidential elections. In 2020, USM saw a 74.7% voting rate, while in 2022, the rate was only 50.4%. This data shows two things: That USM needs to find new ways of engaging student voters in midterm elections and that USM can expect an increase in voter turnout in 2024 (at least in comparison to 2022).

Though there was a drastic reduction in the number of students voting in 2022, the registration rate among students stayed relatively consistent, with a rate of 84.1% in 2020 and 78.7% in 2022. These numbers suggest that voter registration efforts were fairly consistent and that issues with voter turnout were due to a failure to get students to the polls, not a failure to get them registered to vote.

In regards to race/ethnicity, USM saw the lowest turnout among Hispanic students in 2022, with a reduction of 29% from 2020. However, the rates overall are fairly consistent with previous midterm elections, with only a 1% reduction from 2018 (for Hispanic students) and less than 10% in all other categories.

Though voter turnout dramatically increased among young voters in 2020, the 2022 election saw a reversion back to the trend of low turnout for voters under 25 and relatively decent turnout for voters 25 and older. Again, the numbers for this section almost mirror those of 2018. Similarly, the change in voter turnout by sex remained fairly consistent with an increase in 2020 and a reduction in 2022. These numbers also reflect a higher turnout among women due to the breakdown in enrollment.

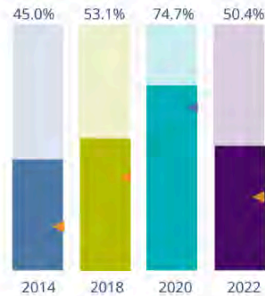


REGISTRATION RATE



The **Registration Rate** is the percent of your voting-eligible students who registered to vote.

VOTING RATE



The **Voting Rate** is the percentage of eligible students who voted on Election Day. The voting rate is also the product of the registration and yield rates.

By Age Group

	2014	2018	2020	2022
18-21	32%	41%	72%	39%
22-24	39%	49%	69%	43%
25-29	44%	57%	73%	53%
30-39	58%	64%	76%	62%
40-49	68%	73%	85%	74%
50+	77%	82%	90%	74%

	2014			2018			2020			2022			2018-2022 Change
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
American Indian/ Alaska Native	99	41	41	83	32	38	77	50	64	60	28	46	↑ 8
Black	231	71	30	389	134	34	443	207	46	429	106	24	↓ -9
Hispanic	140	57	40	207	81	39	245	164	66	275	103	37	↓ -1
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	186	51	27	202	72	35	205	103	50	166	53	31	↓ -3
2 or More Races	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	6,165	2,797	45	5,694	3,144	55	5,681	4,413	77	5,247	2,791	53	↓ -2
Race Unknown	776	375	48	445	222	49	324	231	71	247	115	46	↓ -3

By Sex

	2014			2018			2020			2022			2018-2022 Change
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	
Female	4,488	2,060	45	4,242	2,314	54	4,387	3,348	76	4,066	2,147	52	↓ -1
Male	3,108	1,332	42	2,769	1,368	49	2,575	1,811	70	2,320	1,025	44	↓ -5



Challenges

Internal barriers:

- Three campuses, with different students at each one.
- Lack of civic engagement/democratic learning opportunities.
- Classes still in session on election day, makes it harder for students to find time to vote.
- Low number of young, non-white students registering/voting.
- Out of state students not registering to vote, even though they are eligible if they live on campus.

External barriers:

- Location of polling places and transportation.
- Many polling locations to cover, as USM has a large commuter student population.

Strengths

- As of 2022, the University of Southern Maine's voting rate is 50.4%, which is almost 20% more than the nationwide institutional average of 30.6%.
- There is a high voter turnout rate for presidential elections, and it has raised 5.4% between the 2016 and 2020 elections.
- Work study funds can now be used for election engagement opportunities.

Goals

Longer term Goals



- By 2026, the midterm voting rates of registered students will increase by 10 percentage points over 2018 midterm voting turnout levels, with 90% of the entire University of Southern Maine student population having registered to vote.
- Within the next four years, over 70% of students of all races will be registered to vote.

Short term Goals

- By 2026, the University of Southern Maine will have Student Voting Fellows/Leaders on all three campuses (Lewiston, Gorham, and Portland), as well as faculty advisors in each location to support the students' leadership efforts and events.
- Continual voter education to inform students of their right to vote, including explanations of how registration works, how voting works, and the right to register if living on campus.

Reporting & Evaluation

Plan will circulate internally by

- Sharing with stakeholders to then be shared with faculty.
- Student engagement and opportunities for on-campus student vote work.

Plan will circulate externally, by

- Involving local representatives and city council members.
- Inviting the Southern Maine community to support and engage in election events, learning opportunities, and engagement.

What we want to know:

- Why the rate of young and non-white voters is so low.
- How we can make voter engagement/education accessible on all three campuses.



We will collect feedback by

- Continuing to participate in NSLVE and All-In and engage with the data.
- Asking for student and faculty feedback regarding effectiveness of events, education, and what they would like to see/ the support they need when it comes to civic engagement

Strategy

Yearly

- Have at least one paid student voting organizer (work study or otherwise) for the Lewiston, Portland, and Gorham campus every year.
- Create required programs or short courses for each student to take regarding voter information, democratic engagement, and civic learning.
- Continue voter registration drives, tabling events, and class presentations.
- Recruit a student social media/campaign intern to increase online voting information and support/promote civic events on and off campus.

Election Specific

- Access to transportation and group voting events for early voting and election day.
- Continue to push the administration to make election day an administrative holiday with no classes being held.
- Find new ways of growing USM's election-related efforts.