



University of Southern Maine Campus Voting Action Plan 2022

Executive Summary

This action plan was developed in November 2022 by Emilia Toth, Maine Students Vote, and University of Southern Maine faculty 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 couple of years on and around our campuses in Portland, Gorham, and Lewiston, Maine. This plan will be implemented by several leadership coordinators and stakeholders in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize USM's commitment to civic learning, election engagement, and youth participation in local government.

Leadership and Stakeholders

| Name | Role | Contact Information |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Emilia Toth | Fellow with Maine Students Vote | emilia4strings@gmail.com |
| David Lewis | USM Director of Student Engagement and Leadership | david.lewis@maine.edu |
| Gina Guadagnino | USM Chief of Staff | gina.guadagnino@maine.edu |
| Allyson Gardner | Head of Maine Students Vote | allyson@mainestudentsvote.org |
| Christine O'Brian | USM Coordinator of Student Engagement and Leadership | christine.obrian@maine.edu |
| Jaqueline Edmondson | President of the University of Southern Maine | jacqueline.edmondson@maine.edu |

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. This tenth goal is a goal that "focuses squarely on equity and justice." The school recently adopted a Social Justice Minor as well.

This shows that the University of Southern Maine has a dedication to equity, justice, and civic engagement. Voting is an act that withholds all of these qualities, and the University has shown recent dedication to increasing student voter engagement, now and in the future.

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

- Before his departure, former President Cummings signed the Presidential Commitment for the All In Campus Democracy Challenge, and current President Edmondson plans to do the same.
- The addition of the 10th goal, as well as the Social Justice Minor demonstrates the University's commitment to the education of equity, justice, and civic engagement.
- 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, 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

University of Southern Maine NSLVE Data

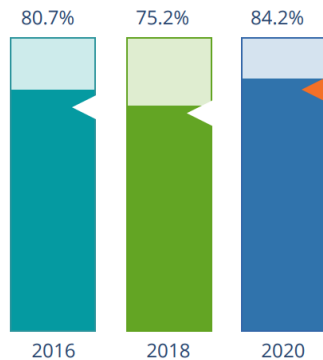
(<https://allinchallenge.org/wp-content/uploads/University-of-Southern-Maine-2020-NSLVE-Report.pdf>)

The University of Southern Maine's NSLVE data from 2018 and 2020 shows key differences between midterm and presidential election voter turnout, especially with younger age groups. The voting rate of registered students was 83.4% and 88.8% in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections (respectively), and only 70.7% during the 2018 midterms.

Less than 50% of registered students between the ages of 18-21 voted in the 2018 midterms, while 72% of students in that same age range voted in the 2020 presidential election. This shows that statistically, there is a trend of low voter turnout for young college students, especially during a midterm year.

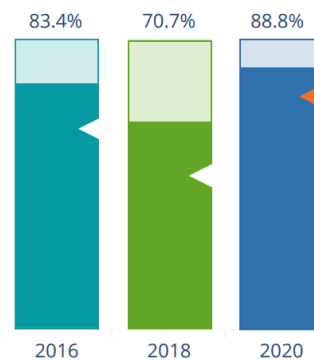
Furthermore, 6-8% more women than men vote in all elections, with non-white students voting 8-28% less than white students.

REGISTRATION RATE



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

VOTING RATE OF REGISTERED STUDENTS



The **Voting Rate of Registered Students** is the percent of registered students who voted on Election Day. We often refer to this as the "yield" rate.

| | 2016 | 2018 | 2020 |
|-------|------|------|------|
| 18-21 | 60% | 42% | 72% |
| 22-24 | 63% | 49% | 69% |
| 25-29 | 68% | 58% | 74% |
| 30-39 | 74% | 65% | 76% |
| 40-49 | 79% | 74% | 86% |
| 50+ | 86% | 83% | 90% |

| | 2016 | | | 2018 | | | 2020 | | | 2016-2020 Change (p.p) |
|--------------------------------------|----------|-------|------|----------|-------|------|----------|-------|------|---------------------------|
| | Enrolled | Voted | Rate | Enrolled | Voted | Rate | Enrolled | Voted | Rate | |
| Asian | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | 80 | 54 | 68 | 83 | 32 | 39 | 77 | 50 | 65 | ↓ -3 |
| Black | 307 | 137 | 45 | 389 | 134 | 34 | 443 | 207 | 47 | ↑ 2 |
| Hispanic | 171 | 101 | 59 | 207 | 81 | 39 | 245 | 164 | 67 | ↑ 8 |
| Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander | 181 | 70 | 39 | 202 | 72 | 36 | 205 | 103 | 50 | ↑ 12 |
| 2 or More Races | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| White | 5,576 | 3,828 | 69 | 5,694 | 3,144 | 55 | 5,681 | 4,413 | 78 | ↑ 9 |
| Race Unknown | 531 | 362 | 68 | 445 | 222 | 50 | 324 | 231 | 71 | ↑ 3 |

| | 2016 | | | 2018 | | | 2020 | | | 2016-2020 Change (p.p) |
|--------|----------|-------|------|----------|-------|------|----------|-------|------|---------------------------|
| | Enrolled | Voted | Rate | Enrolled | Voted | Rate | Enrolled | Voted | Rate | |
| Female | 4,082 | 2,840 | 70 | 4,242 | 2,314 | 55 | 4,387 | 3,348 | 76 | ↑ 7 |
| Male | 2,757 | 1,709 | 62 | 2,769 | 1,368 | 49 | 2,575 | 1,811 | 70 | ↑ 8 |

Challenges:

Internal barriers:

- Three campuses, with different students at each one.
- Lack of funding for work study or student voting organizers.
- 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 there are several commuter students that live all over Maine.

Strengths:

- As of 2020, the University of Southern Maine's voting rate was 74.7%, which is 8.7% more than the nationwide institutional average of 66%.
- There is a high voter turnout rate for presidential elections, and it has raised 5.4% between the 2016 and 2020 elections.

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 2024, 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.
- Between now and 2024, active voter education will continue 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.
- Talk to faculty/staff about having a day off for election day.