

2022 TOMMIES VOTE



Civic Learning & Engagement Action Plan

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OVERVIEW

ST. THOMAS CEVEA|03



The University of St. Thomas, with a residential four-year campus in St. Paul as well as graduate programs and a two-year college in Minneapolis, is the largest of the 17 private colleges and universities in Minnesota. The university's 10,000 students – historically drawn from Minnesota and the Upper Midwest – are increasingly diverse in geography, ethnicity, and social class. Educating morally responsible leaders who advance the common good, St. Thomas draws on its Catholic roots to paint a vision of and work toward a more inclusive, just, and equitable society.

Our recently formed Racial Justice Initiative, headed by nationally renowned scholar and activist Dr. Yohuru Williams, and our new Morrison Family College of Health focused on health equity and headed by Dr. MayKao Hang, previously president and CEO of the Wilder Foundation, are but two examples of the transformative work being done – civically, socially, academically – at this institution founded in 1885 as a high school, college, and seminary for Catholic immigrants. The university also has a campus in Rome.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ST. THOMAS CEVEA|04

A strong commitment to nonpartisan civic education and voter engagement is embedded at the University of St. Thomas, led in recent years by the Civic Engagement, Voting, Education, and Advocacy (CEVEA) taskforce and leadership team. The CEVEA taskforce is made up of representation from campus constituencies including faculty, staff, administration, and students. This taskforce is responsible for design and implementation of the Tommies Vote 2022 Action Plan.

The 2020 election generated strong momentum at St. Thomas that the university is excited to build upon in years to come. For 2022 specifically, CEVEA leadership has identified several short- and long-term goals. These include:

- Increase voter registration to over 90 percent.
- Help students learn to advocate for issues and connect them with federal, state, and local officials while maintaining our institutional responsibility to refrain from partisan political activity.
- Embed voter registration into campus events such as orientation and September move-in weekend.
- Establish the St. Paul campus as an early voting location for current and future elections, which would benefit both our students and campus neighbors.

We articulate and expand upon these goals later in this report.

This report also details intentional strategies that St. Thomas will implement to help the university reach the goals that have been set. These strategies include, but are not limited to, implementing the Ask Every Student project, intentionally engaging with student organizations, encouraging participation in Day at the Capitol events, utilizing National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reports, engaging more intentionally with neighborhood students (many of whom vote in the community where they were raised), and working with key partners like Lead MN, Campus Compact, and Ready to Run.

St. Thomas acknowledges the challenges that exist in our current times and remains steadfast in the commitment to increasing voter education and access as well as helping our politically diverse student body to deal with the deep political divisions of our day. This commitment to civic engagement and action aligns with the mission of the University of St. Thomas to "educate students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good."



LEADERSHIP & CEVEA

ST. THOMAS CEVEA|05

The University of St. Thomas created the Civic Engagement, Voter Education, and Advocacy (CEVEA) Taskforce in 2019 with a mission to “coordinate, streamline, and promote campus-wide civic engagement, voter education, and advocacy efforts in order to advance the common good.” CEVEA is a campus-wide collaborative whose 42 active members include faculty members, university administrators from Student Affairs to Academic Affairs to Office for Mission, library staff, as well as six students. The CEVEA Leadership Team likewise represents a broad cross-section of university stakeholders.

CEVEA LEADERSHIP TEAM (LISTED ALPHABETICALLY)

- Roberto Aspholm, Assistant Professor of Social Work and CEVEA Faculty Liaison
- Amy Gage, Director of Neighborhood and Community Relations
- Katharine Hill, Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement and Research
- Manuela Hill-Muñoz, Director of Innovation, Creative Content and Changemaking
- Amy McDonough, Chief of Staff and Liaison to the Office of the President
- Teri Mueller, Program Manager, Center for the Common Good
- Theresa Ricke-Kiely, Executive Director, Center for the Common Good

CEVEA TASKFORCE TEAM (LISTED ALPHABETICALLY)

ADMINISTRATION:

- Patricia Conde-Brooks, Executive Director, Student Engagement and Inclusion
- Jennifer Snyder, Director of Development, College of Arts and Sciences

STAFF:

- Margaret Cahill, Director, Campus Life
- Anna Ewart, Service Analyst, Innovation and Technology Services
- Casey Gordon, Senior Program Manager, Center for the Common Good
- Bryan Helminiak, Associate Director, Residence Life
- Josh Hengemuhle, Assistant Dean, Dean of Students office
- Dustin Killpack, Associate Director, Center for the Common Good
- Ed Kim, Digital Project Manager, Marketing Insights and Communications
- Michael Spooner, Marketing Program Director, Marketing Insights and Communications
- Kelly Sardon-Garrity, Associate Director, Center for the Common Good
- Ariene Willkom, Assistant Director, Alumni Relations-Alumni Career & Corporate-Alumni Association
- Ozzy Zaimi, Program Manager II, Global Learning & Strategy- Office of International Students and Scholars

CEVEA TASKFORCE TEAM (LISTED ALPHABETICALLY) CONTINUED

ST. THOMAS CEVEA|06

FACULTY:

- Mel Gray, Business Economics, professor emeritus
- Angela High-Pippert, Political Science
- Jessica Hodge, Sociology and Criminal Justice
- Mike Klein, Justice and Peace Studies
- Amy Levad, Theology
- Paul Lorah, Geography
- Timothy Lynch, Political Science
- Patricia Maddox, Sociology and Criminal Justice
- Amelia McNamara, Computer, and Information Sciences
- Christopher Michaelson, Business Ethics and Social Responsibility
- Debra Petersen, Communication Studies
- Aaron Sackett, Marketing
- Muffet Trout, Education

STUDENTS:

- Sophia Faacks, Newman Fellow 2021
- Cora Heinzen
- Julia Judson
- Mara Novillo
- Kate Ostaffe, CEEP Intern 2020
- Khaled Shouman
- Tyus Edmond, Global Justice Movement Intern

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

- Jessica Howell-Catholic Relief Services
- Advocacy Representative-Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis
- Jane Turk-Campus Compact Minnesota



CEVEA was organized to provide an institutional collective base for voter registration, civic engagement events, voter turnout efforts, and similar endeavors, formalizing activities that had previously been carried out via Student Affairs and the Undergraduate Student Government (USG).

In the span of its relatively short two-year existence, CEVEA has sponsored and strategically implemented a wide range of activities to further its mission, including systematically scheduling voter registration events, including National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and turnout events in the days leading up to elections; panel events, including a legal panel in anticipation of the Derek Chauvin trial and a faculty and senior leadership panel reflecting upon the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol; guest speaker events, including webinars with elected officials like the Minnesota Secretary of State and county elections officials; collaborating with community entities and neighboring universities in co-hosting events, such as candidate forums for the Saint Paul School Board.

These efforts extend beyond national election years into local election years. For example, in Fall 2021, we hosted several voter-registration events – including a half-dozen registration posts on National Voter Registration Day – as well as a “Donut Forget to Vote” event the day before election day, featuring a food truck on campus to distribute fresh doughnuts, remind students to turn out the vote, and distribute reminders and voting swag.

CEVEA has also engaged with other university partners in a range of capacities in promoting civic engagement. For example, we hired student Campus Election Engagement Project interns during the 2020 election year, who lent instrumental support in working with Manuela Hill-Muñoz, director of innovation, creative content and changemaking, in coordinating student engagement efforts. We are also working with USG to navigate campus coverage of various events and endeavors and collaborate on the annual Day at the Capitol event sponsored by the Minnesota Private College Council. We have also prioritized a collaboration with the university’s Athletics Department to promote voter registration and turnout, given that the university’s recent transition into D1 allows us to participate in higher-profile Athletic Voting competitions.

These efforts have translated into heightened levels of democratic engagement among our student body. In November 2021, the University of St. Thomas was awarded the Platinum Seal for Voting Rate by ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge for our campus’ achievement of a student voting rate of 82.2 percent, an increase of nearly 5 percentage points from 2016; according to a recent report by Lead MN, it represented the fourth-highest student voter rate among all colleges and universities in the state of Minnesota. It is also 16 percentage points higher than the national average.

COMMITMENT & MISSION

CEVEA is housed in the University of St. Thomas's Center for the Common Good, which reports to the Vice President for Mission. The Center for the Common Good oversees "collaborative curricular, co-curricular, and research initiatives that address civic and community challenges" and works to "encourage and support students, staff, and faculty to be transformational partners who work tirelessly for social justice in our local, national, and global communities."

CEVEA and the Center for the Common Good both embody the mission of the university, which reads: "Inspired by Catholic intellectual tradition, the University of St. Thomas educates students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good." Its community partners include Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Keystone Community Services.

The University of St. Thomas is both broadly and specifically committed to the ideals of democratic engagement promoted by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. Moreover, the university has institutionalized resources dedicated toward this end and will continue to explore strategies for strengthening this work as we move forward into 2022 and beyond.

CAMPUS & COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE

A neighborhood-based city, St. Paul created 17 District Councils in the 1970s, at the behest of a popular and charismatic mayor, in order to foster citizen engagement and streamline citizen input to the City Council. Our home campus in St. Paul straddles two District Councils (Union Park and Macalester Groveland), both of which are seeking more engagement with college students. We aim to work with Human Resources to create work-study jobs off campus in order to incentivize participation in the District Council board and committee meetings, where student input would be important on matters of housing, transportation, sustainability, voting, and more.

Although our demographics and our Admissions goals are evolving, St. Thomas currently draws primarily from the Twin Cities, Greater Minnesota, and nearby Iowa and Wisconsin, making it relatively easy for students to vote in person in the town or city where they were raised. CEVEA aims both to better engage our residential and nearby neighborhood students in the issues of St. Paul and to encourage particularly our BIPOC students to be civically engaged in their home communities. Whether through voting, education, or activism, however, student engagement in our local community is especially pertinent given the racial reckoning that the Twin Cities metro area is undergoing, along with the growing calls for equity and inclusive policies – in housing, policing, and more – from both the Minneapolis and St. Paul City Councils.

The majority of our 55 graduate-degree programs are housed on a campus in downtown Minneapolis, which in recent years has become home to the transformational two-year Dougherty Family College. The cohort-based program prepares "historically underrepresented scholars to earn a future bachelor's degree, get on the path to a meaningful professional career and step into their role as transformative community leaders," according to the DFC Vision Statement. The campus recently hosted a "Black Voters Matter" seminar featuring national advocate LaTosha Brown.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

- Maintain/increase the voter registrations rates on campus, relative to 2020 when the registration rate on the St. Thomas campus was 89.1 percent.
 - Our ambitious goal aims for 90 to 95 percent registration across the student body.
- Improve St. Thomas's voter turnout rate from 82 to 90 percent:
 - Provide students with resources about the variety of ways to vote, including absentee voting, voting in another state, and voting while abroad.
 - Educate students of their nearby polling locations in St. Paul, to help voting seem easy and accessible on Election Day. Most on-campus students vote at our on-campus polling location; a portion of on-campus students and all neighborhood students vote at one of two nearby community centers or in their home communities.
 - Build cross-campus collaborations with our D1 Athletics division and other campus groups to create a Voter Ambassador leadership group.
 - Engage the Neighborhood Student Advisors to educate and engage neighborhood students – most of whom come from Twin Cities suburbs or nearby communities – on the question of whether to vote in St. Paul or in their home districts.
 - Remove barriers of transportation and inconvenience by arranging for shuttles to the two off-campus voting locations and helping students learn about and utilize Metro Transit.
- Provide students with accessible ways to register to vote by utilizing technology and resources such as [TurboVote](#).
- Provide students with opportunities to participate in panel-facilitated discussions and lectures (in person and virtually) to learn about the election process.
- Work with all University social media accounts to engage students in voter registration, voter engagement, and voting for fall 2022.
- Have CEVEA engage at the beginning of fall semester with student political groups, which can host candidate visits on campus without a perception of university bias. Potential collaborations could include [College Democrats](#) and [College Republicans](#).
- Deepen ties with the nonpartisan [League of Women Voters-St. Paul](#) and [SPNN](#) to ensure that St. Thomas is a go-to place to host in-person and televised candidate forums, allowing students to learn about local issues.
- Evaluate whether a single source of outreach (a digital or printed "must read") is necessary to consistently reach students on critical issues such as voting.

GOALS

LONG-TERM GOALS

- Ensure that the St. Paul campus can be an early-voting location.
- Work with Ramsey County and our Ward 4 City Councilmember to house a second voting location on campus in St. Paul, ensuring that every residential student would have the convenience to vote in person, if desired.
- Expand voter education and outreach to both the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses, and tailor that work to better meet the diverse needs of our various student communities.
- Embed voter registration information in St. Thomas summer registration, new-student orientation, and housing move-in each September.
- Systematize the voter registration reminder process through university automated systems and more consistently direct students to voting resources such as those provided by St. Thomas Libraries, the Minnesota Secretary of State office (mnvotes.org), and TurboVote to engage out-of-state voters.
- Include election-related information on the university calendar.
- Further embed community/civic engagement, democratic participation, and political inclusivity in future iterations of the university's strategic plan.
- Encourage faculty to create a placeholder in their curriculum regarding civic engagement and voting.
- Secure greater university and outside funding for voter mobilization activities such as applying for CEEP Interns and Lead MN Student Voter Engagement Programs.
- Participate and place in the top 3 for the Lead MN Democracy Cup in Minnesota.
- Engage our Athletic coaches in the All IN Coaches Commitment.



- Implement the Ask Every Student project: Focus on “accessing a few minutes of focus from every student on campus,” to empower them to participate in our democracy. We intend to work closely with members of the CEVEA team and the Ask Every Student team to implement these tactics and resources, starting with the integration of voter registration into the 2022 new-student orientation.
- Engage student organizations: Meaningfully engage student organizations through initiatives such as the Tommies Vote Student Organization Challenge, student organization meeting visits, partnerships with key executive board members for select organizations, and partnerships with academic and co-curricular campus entities to further our reach.
- Expand on-campus voting: The St. Paul campus hosts a Ramsey County polling location in McNeely Hall, where most of our residential students vote. We will be working with our Ward 4 City Council member to relocate the nearby Groveland polling location to south campus, which would accommodate all our residential students and allow more convenient parking for neighborhood voters.
- Help students discern where to vote: Our neighborhood students, especially, tend to vote at home, because they feel better informed about hometown races such as School Board and City Council. We want to encourage all our students – residential and near neighbors alike – to become better educated about and involved in St. Paul politics, which we believe could inspire them to “vote local” and become more engaged in local political issues.
- Embed Day at the Capitol in our culture: Systematize St. Thomas’ participation in Day at the Capitol, an annual Minnesota Private College Council (MPCC) initiative during the legislative session. Meet with each year’s USG president and legislative affairs senators upon election; visit with the entire student government board in September; and ensure faculty awareness of and participation in Day at the Capitol by designating a faculty champion each fall and meeting with faculty leadership and their deans.
- Continue State Grant initiative: Build upon the university’s strong showing in the MPCC’s annual “thank you” note campaign for the Minnesota State Grant, a program that awarded more than \$8 million to 1,652 undergraduate students at St. Thomas in academic year 2020-21, with an average award of \$4,884. We could better capitalize on this already-engaged audience of students by asking them to participate in voting initiatives and Day at the Capitol.
- Promote Capitol-based civic engagement: The School of Social Work participates in its own annual Day at the Capitol each spring in conjunction with the Minnesota chapter of the National Association of Social Work. This typically involves training, information sessions, and meetings with elected officials.
- Engage with CEEP: Continue to support the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) fellowship program by applying for funding for two St. Thomas CEEP interns. CEEP interns will continue to be part of the student leadership for CEVEA and focus their work on campus-wide communications, educational programs, and community events.

- Develop lifelong advocates: Continue engagement and growth of our Global Justice Movement through Catholic Relief Services (CRS).
 - The Global Justice Movement through CRS is a campus National and Global Changemaking student effort that engages the campus community in national advocacy. Each year students from the Global Justice Movement through CRS work on educating our campus community about issues of global hunger and migrants/refugees; these education sessions allow us to build awareness and then challenge our St. Thomas community toward action and advocacy. The Global Justice Movement through CRS runs monthly advocacy 101 workshops that educate students on the “how” of advocacy. Alongside these monthly workshops the Global Justice Movement through CRS supports the advocacy asks of CRS. Over the past two years, students from the Global Justice Movement have participated in letter-writing campaigns, official advocacy meetings with elected representatives, and advocacy for supplemental appropriations for international aid in response to COVID-19, the Global Child Thrive Act, and the Global Fragility Act.
 - St. Thomas’s students continue to support advocacy through learning, focusing on skill development and engagement with elected officials. The Global Justice Movement through CRS is a successful and impactful way for our Tommies to engage in National and Global Changemaking that advances the common good.
- Ready to Run: The University of St. Thomas College of Arts and Sciences is the exclusive Minnesota partner of Ready to Run®. Part of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, Ready to Run® is a national network of non-partisan campaign training programs designed to encourage women to run for elective office, position themselves for appointive office, work on a campaign, or strengthen their citizenship skills. Ready to Run Minnesota also works to encourage all of us to support the increased representation of women in politics. Research in political science shows that women officeholders increase the transparency of government action, and work to make government more inclusive and accessible. Importantly, women bring different priorities and experiences to public life, including perspectives that have been largely absent from the public policymaking process. Ready to Run focuses on positioning oneself for office, navigating the political party structure, fundraising, media training, and the nuts and bolts of organizing a campaign, crafting a winning message, and mobilizing voters. Ready to Run Minnesota was established in 2019 with the first all-day campaign training event planned for May of 2020. While this training was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we launched a Ready to Run Minnesota virtual campaign training series in September of 2021. Learn more [here](#).

NSLVE ENGAGEMENT

ST. THOMAS CEVEA|12

Like many colleges, the University of St. Thomas partners with the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE) housed at Tufts University to get data about student registration and voting rates through the NSLVE (National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement) report.

St. Thomas was awarded a Platinum Seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge for the university's strong student voter registration and participation in the 2020 presidential elections as shown in the 2020 NSLVE report. The 2020 voting rate of 82.2 percent is an improvement from the 2016 presidential voting rate of 77.3 percent, for which St. Thomas had been awarded a Gold Seal. The university plans to channel the momentum of achieving a Platinum Seal to further improve voting rates in the Platinum Seal Range of 80 to 89 percent voting rate and work toward the Diamond Seal credential criteria of 90 to 100 percent voting rate. Closely monitoring the university's NSLVE reports will help St. Thomas to keep tabs on the voting rate in both midterm and presidential elections as the university works to more deeply engage our students in the preparation and act of voting.



[2020 NSLVE Report](#)

[2018 NSLVE Report](#)

REPORTING & EVALUATION

ST. THOMAS CEVEA|13

St. Thomas works diligently to share information about voting initiatives and civic engagement with the campus community. CEVEA maintains a web presence on St. Thomas' intranet, One St. Thomas, and reports information about voter registration and turnout statistics via [select news stories](#) and different social media accounts such as [Instagram @USTChangemaking](#). The university has also developed a [Voting and Civic Engagement research guide](#) on the library website to provide campus constituents with up-to-date information on voting and access to helpful resources.

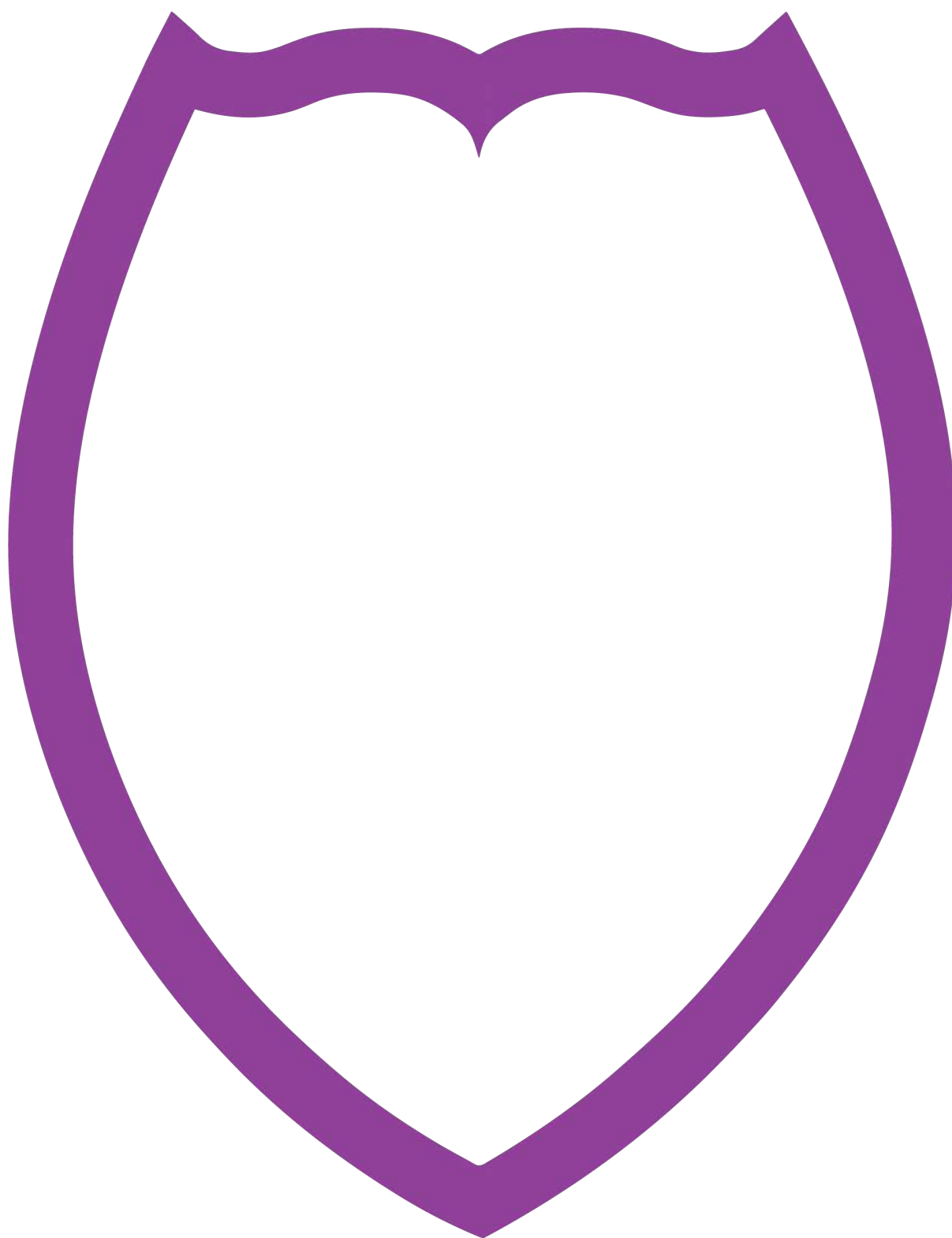
Data from the NSLVE reports will help the university to evaluate changes in voting over time to ensure that adequate – and ambitious – progress is being made.

St. Thomas will continue to strengthen our measurements to have better evaluation processes such as:

- Track participation in programming by utilizing [Tommie Link](#), our widely used club-management software, to scan participants' event passes.
- Provide opportunities for reflection post events via Tommie Link.
- Incentivize participation particularly of first-year students by adding events to be part of the FYEX ([First-Year Experience](#)) program.
- Track views and clicks on websites, social media platforms, and email communications.

We plan to gather information throughout the process and adjust programming and outreach based on the data as we go along. We will also do an overall evaluation with all data after the 2022 elections, using these data – along with the information we receive in our next NSLVE report – to evaluate our success in meeting the goals we have set out in this plan. We will share the information gathered through the CEVEA team, reports to upper administration, social media, and university news outlets as appropriate.

We are eager to proceed!



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