



**SAINT LOUIS**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
— EST. 1818 —

## **ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge 2016**

### **Action Plan**

#### **Saint Louis University Campus Contact**

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#### **Voter Engagement Committee**

Jill Carnaghi, Assistant Vice President for Student Development

Donna Bess Myers, Assistant Dean of Students

Peg Weathers, Assistant Vice President for Community Relations

Ellen Carnaghan, Department Chair, Department of Political Science

Steve Rogers, Faculty, Department of Political Science

Annie Cavendine, Director, International Student Services

Katlyn Martin, Senator, Student Government Association

Bryan Sokol, Director, Center for Service and Community Engagement

Leah Sweetman, Assistant Director, Center for Service and Community Engagement

Robert Wassel, Assistant Director, Center for Service and Community Engagement

Louis Galli, Office of the General Counsel

Marc Scheessele, Director of Government Relations, Office of the General Counsel

David Young, Assistant Director, Student Involvement Center

Susan Chawszczewski, Director, Campus Ministry

Antonio King, Residence Hall Coordinator, Housing and Residence Life

Bert Barry, Program Manager, Center for Global Citizenship

Michelle Peltier, Web Projects Coordinator, Student Development and advisor for the University News

Maria Tsikalas, Editor, Marketing and Communications

#### **Others who will Help Implement the Action Plan**

Jonathan Smith, Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Community Engagement

Ramona Hicks, Assistant Vice President for Student Development and Dean of Students

Clayton Berry, Assistant Vice President for Communications

Robert Cropf, Faculty, Department of Political Science

Michelle Lorenzini, Faculty, Department of Political Science and advisor for Political Round Table

Stephen Belt, Faculty, Department of Aviation Science

Andrew Molnar, Faculty, School for Professional Studies

Joseph Nichols, Faculty, Department of Educational Studies

Sara Scholtes, Faculty, Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training

Tim Huffman, Faculty, Department of Communication

## **Local and National Community Partners**

Board of Election Commissioners, City of St. Louis

Democracy Works and TurboVote

National Voter Registration Day

Missouri Campus Compact

Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

National Conference on Citizenship

## **Goals**

1. Saint Louis University would like to increase student political engagement, and not only during the Presidential election season. Through voter education efforts and opportunities to discuss ballot issues and relevant public policy, we will work to promote the importance of local and state political engagement, as well as national issues and races during non-Presidential election seasons.
2. Through on-campus voter registration drives and heightened communications, Saint Louis University would like to increase the percentage of students who are registered to vote.
3. The Voter Engagement Committee would like enhance the working relationship between Academic Affairs and the Division of Student Development at Saint Louis University, particularly around voter education, voter registration, and Get out the Vote.

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Voter Registration**

Saint Louis University has entered into a partnership with TurboVote. The student organization, Political Round Table, is active in voter registration drives on campus, as well as other student groups and student leaders. There are tables and representation at several campus events, including campus welcome activities, Homecoming and Family weekend, the student involvement fair, the community service fair, and debate watch parties. Saint Louis University registered with the National Voter Registration Day. Student leaders and the committee planned campus activities to support the day. University Marketing and Communication as well as the University News provide extensive coverage on the voter registration process, including relevant deadlines.

### **Voter Education**

Saint Louis University has an established voting website, <http://www.slu.edu/division-of-student-development/voting-information>, which showcases University election experts and provides links to national voter registration resources, election calendars, and relevant organizations. SLU's TurboVote page (<http://slu.turbovote.org>) is also be accessible from that site.

Saint Louis University hosted debate watch parties for the Presidential debates in September and October, as well as the Vice Presidential Debates. The events were planned after the successful spring 2016 primary debate watch parties, as well as an election night watch party after the Super Tuesday primaries. Those events were well attended and included faculty, staff, and students. Table discussions took place, and students led voter registration efforts. One of the benefits of holding debates on college campuses is the learning opportunity and the ongoing conversations that take place. Debate watching and subsequent dialogue creates a community of learners. One of the Presidential debates takes place

in St. Louis at Washington University. This creates opportunities to build community as a college campus, a city, and a region, especially with the extensive national media coverage. Students were encouraged to engage the debate process through their faculty, their student organizations, and at campus events taking place earlier in the semester.

The committee helps promote and sponsor campus events on relevant policy issues, as well as elections, laws, and polling. For example, the Departments of Political Science and Communication has a number of ideas for topics and speakers, including presentations from their own faculty on polling, voter demographics, and voter rights. The School of Law hosted a session on Voter ID laws. Saint Louis University Museum of Art has a historical presidential campaign collection that is on exhibit during every Presidential election season.

Because Saint Louis University is a faith-based institution, the Center for Campus Ministry has provided copies of *An Ignatian Examen for Civic Life*, produced by the Ignatian Solidarity Network. The document, which is a call to be contemplatives in action, offers the opportunity for reflection and encourages readers to talk with God in specific ways about the interrelationship between Gospel values and political engagement.

In June, Bryan Sokol, director of the Center for Service and Community Engagement led a delegation of SLU faculty to attend the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Meeting in Indianapolis. This group of faculty will continue to dialogue around the importance of student civic engagement and how they can effectively support the Voter Engagement Committee.

### **Ballot Access**

Saint Louis University organized an on-campus polling place, which will be located in the Busch Student Center. SLU was also a polling place during the 2012 Presidential Election and during the 2014 midterm elections. Students who live on-campus and register using their campus address will be able to vote in the Busch Student Center. SLU's partnership with TurboVote will provide students voting absentee with the out-of-state voting information that they need.

### **Get Out the Vote**

One benefit of using TurboVote will be the reminders that students can receive which will include polling place and election-day reminders. Students and staff from the Center for Service and Community Engagement, University Marketing and Communications, as well as the Student Government Association will help raise awareness about Election Day through posting fliers and banners in campus buildings and sending email messages and posting on social media. The committee works with local election officials to recruit students to be poll workers.

The Study Abroad Office communicates with students who are studying abroad during the fall semester. The communications include information about absentee voting and voter registration. The SLU TurboVote webpage will also be shared with students studying abroad. As the campus wraps up fall Get Out the Vote efforts, there will be an Election Night Watch Party held on campus.

### **Timeline**

The committee meets every 2 weeks from mid-August through November, 2016. After Election Day, the Center for Service and Community Engagement will continue to share events, reports, and relevant activities related to voter education, voter registration, and voter turnout. The Center for Service and Community Engagement will convene meetings of smaller subgroups, particularly around local elections,

preparing for midterm election turnout, as well as reaching out to additional academic units. For students who are registered at their local St. Louis address, there will be a competitive mayoral primary in the spring of 2017, which will receive a great deal of local media coverage. The committee is already planning educational activities, including a potential debate, on campus.

## **EVALUATION**

Saint Louis University will utilize the TurboVote metrics as well as political involvement indicators through the annual Student Survey on Service. It is feasible that 75% of eligible SLU students will be registered to vote for the November, 2016 election. It is also feasible that SLU will maintain a higher than 50% voter turnout and a higher than other private research institutions turnout. Early after the November election, there will be another voter registration and get out the vote effort for students living on campus, so that they are eligible and informed to vote in the 2017 mayoral election in the City of St. Louis. This will be a good way to keep the voter engagement momentum up, so that preparing for the 2018 midterm elections should not and will not feel like the campus is beginning again.

The Center for Service and Community Engagement administered the 2015-2106 Student Survey on Service to all students in April. In this year's survey, a scale that assesses political involvement was included. The scale distinguishes between levels of involvement, from having political conversations, to simple actions, to deeper engagement. The survey had 1,236 participants who volunteered and 387 who did not volunteer this past year. For students who volunteered, their mean Political Discourse score was 3.07 on a 5-point scale (indicating "sometimes"), which is statistically higher than students who do not volunteer (M = 2.71). The Political Action score (M = 2.62) is also significantly higher than those who do not volunteer (M = 2.40). Finally, their Political Engagement scores were both low (Ms = 1.63 and 1.50), although again the students who volunteered still scored significantly higher than those who did not. For pre/post assessment purposes, this survey will also be administered in April, 2017.

In addition, the Center for Service and Community Engagement will pay close attention to NSLVE data for the fall 2016 elections, in the hopes that there can be an increase in voter turnout for the 2018 midterm elections. Saint Louis University recognizes that 69% of registered SLU students voted in the 2012 Presidential election. The committee expects similar voter rates in November, 2016. The committee will analyze the effectiveness of TurboVote in assisting students with voter registration and sending out voting reminders. The expectation is that with TurboVote, as well as the work of the committee, SLU can more effectively encourage students to not only register to vote and update registration information, but to turn out and vote. SLU's 2014 midterm voting rate of 18% was lower than national averages and that of other private institutions. It is clear to the committee that there is room for improvement.