

Amherst College
ALL IN Democracy Challenge Action Plan
Fall 2018

SUMMARY

The Amherst ALL IN Democracy Challenge Action Plan was developed by the Association of Amherst Students and Office of Student Activities.

Every 2 years, Amherst College students, administration, faculty, and staff participate in the national-wide, state-wide and local elections of their respective communities. Though we are a campus that prides itself in civic engagement, we do not currently have a formal structure in place for election years. In addition, though our Voter Registration Rate was 62.4% (1,043) in the midterm elections of 2014, our Voting Rate of registered students was only 15.2% (159), which was 9.5% of our student enrollment.

This plan will finalize a committee of administration, staff, and students that can implement our strategy and complete our goals for voter registration and turn out each election year. It includes concrete goals for the 2018 election year.

The Civic Engagement Committee will consist of:

- Sarah Barr, Director of the Center for Community Engagement
- Paul Gallegos, Director of the Office of Student Activities
- Jxhn Martin, Director of the Queer Resource Center
- Silvia Sotolongo '19, Student Body President
- Taylor Pelletier '19, Co-President of Amherst Political Union
- Simon Essig-Asberg '19, Co-President of the Amherst Political Union
- Nate Quigley '19, Co-editor in chief of the Amherst Student
- Isabel Tessier '19, co-editor in chief of the Amherst Student
- Amelie Hastie, Professor of Film and Media Studies and English
- Rachael Hanley, Director of Social and New Media

GOALS

1. Incorporate Civic Engagement into our Orientation Programming each Fall
2. Maintain our voter Registration Rate at 62.4% (2014)
3. Increase Voting Rate of Registered students from previous midterm elections (15.2% in 2014) and Overall Voting Rate (9.5% in 2014)

STRATEGY

Various student groups across campus will table in Keefe Campus Center to encourage students to register to vote, check their registration status, and request their absentee ballots. Every two weeks, our social media outreach and marketing campaigns will shift to create a new emphasis (i.e. register, or request ballot, or get out the vote) under the umbrella campaign of ACVotes. Tabling includes providing free envelopes, printing, and assistance for registering or requesting ballots.

We will have an absentee ballot/commit to vote ‘party’ in Keefe Campus Center on October 26th. We will provide food, music, and stickers for students who have sent in their ballot or committed to vote in person. On November 6th, we will also walk students to the polls every couple of hours.

REPORTING

Primarily, we will use the NSLVE 2018 data on Amherst College to understand our success for student registration and voting rate, particularly for student athletes, students of color, and students in STEM. Our evaluation of this data will allow the committee and other stakeholders to decide what resources and time should be devoted to this project in the coming years. More specifically, our work for the 2018 midterm election began in August of 2018; based on our numbers and work within this committee, we may benefit from beginning election work, particularly during a presidential election, earlier.

EVALUATION

We will meet multiple times post-election, particularly in the Spring of 2019, to debrief our work during midterm elections and what elections might look like in the future. We hope to create a permanent civic engagement committee/group that is dedicated to this work each year. This group will consist of students, faculty, staff, and administration that understand the importance of civic engagement and can incorporate registration or other initiatives into student programming, such as orientation.

We will analyze what efforts were successful in increasing registration and voting on campus and how students reacted to the ACVotes campaign. We will also use informal response data from either surveying or with student groups to understand how the efforts to increase registration and voting was received among the student body. If students continued to perceive that registering and voting in the midterms elections were too difficult, this committee's work must focus on deconstructing those barriers.