

Strengthening American Democracy
ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
Action Plan
Saint Francis University (PA)
December 15, 2017

Introduction:

Saint Francis University (SFU) has a longstanding tradition of encouraging students to participate in the electoral processes. The SFU Center for the Study of Government & Law (CSG&L), with the assistance of the Department of History and Political Science and the Pre-Law Club, conducts campus-wide voter registration drives two times per year, one prior to the November general elections and one prior to the spring primaries. SFU attempts to help young voters get started and to encourage them to form habits of active and informed citizenship that will carry over into the future.

Some contextual background information about SFU is provided in the next section.

SFU Mission Statement:

A Mind for Excellence. Saint Francis University offers higher education in an environment guided by Catholic values and teachings, and inspired by the example of our patron, Saint Francis of Assisi. The oldest Franciscan institution of higher learning in the United States, Saint Francis University is an inclusive learning community that welcomes all people.

A Spirit for Peace and Justice. University programs and activities foster such Franciscan values as a humble and generous attitude toward learning, respect for diversity and the uniqueness of individual persons, understanding of ethical issues, and reverence for all life. With a spirit of simplicity and joy, we provide opportunities for the University community to think critically and analytically, communicate effectively, and integrate theory and practice.

A Heart for Service. Saint Francis University offers undergraduate programs in the liberal arts tradition, graduate and professional programs of study that emphasize personal and professional ethics, and continuing education opportunities for personal and career enhancement. We seek to inspire in all members of the University community a love of lifelong learning and a commitment to share their gifts and skills generously with others in a rapidly changing world.

Goals of Franciscan Higher Education:

History of the Goals. The fullest and most far-reaching expression of how the institution has articulated the vision of Franciscan values which was lived by its founding brothers came in the fall of 1991. After some time of reflection the President, Fr. Christian Oravec, proposed a series of "Goals of Franciscan Higher Education at Saint Francis College," which "Saint Francis College...strives to incorporate...into the life and work of the community." These goals were in turn immediately and fully embraced by the administration and faculty and would eventually become the basis for the revised program of general education inaugurated at Saint Francis College in 1993 and implemented with the entering freshman class of 1994. (Note: In 2001, "Saint Francis College" was accredited with university status by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and was renamed "Saint Francis University.")

A Humble and Generous Attitude toward Learning. Aware that all talents of mind and heart are gifts of God, the source of all good, and realizing that knowledge is not a personal possession intended solely for self-advancement, as members of the Saint Francis community we strive to share our abilities and skills

generously with others. We seek not the power and prestige of knowledge nor the desire to control or dominate but to serve. We strive for excellence without arrogance, willingly sharing our knowledge and wisdom, and humbly learning from one another. As a community of learners seeking the truth together, we encourage the free and open exchange of ideas and responsible action.

Reverence for All Life and for the Goodness of All Humanity. As children of God, we are brothers and sisters to each other, to all humanity, and to all God's creatures. Thus we strive to show reverence for all human life and for life in all its forms, to treat all people with dignity and respect, and to work together for the common good. In a spirit of charity, we care for and support each other, helping to bind the wounds of those who suffer and bearing one another's burdens. We also care for the earth which is our home and work to protect and preserve it for future generations.

Respect for the Uniqueness of Individual Persons. In imitation of Francis of Assisi, who was open to human personality in all its variety and who saw the image of God multiplied but never monotonous, we recognize that each individual person is a unique combination of God-given abilities. We know that each person expresses the goodness of God in a particular way. Every member of the University community thus deserves to be treated respectfully and each should treat others with respect. Students especially should be accorded as much personal attention as possible. With education of the whole person as our goal, we endeavor to foster the intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual growth of Saint Francis students and to prepare them not just for productive careers but for fruitful lives.

A Global Vision. As citizens of the earth and as brothers and sisters in the global community, we embrace all classes of people and respect all cultures, all races, and all religions. We strive to resolve conflict non-violently and to work for justice within our community, our society, and our world. We work to build up God's people everywhere, to bring reconciliation, and to act as instruments of peace in the communities we serve.

Service to the Poor and Needy. In the spirit of Saint Francis, the poverello, we strive to be compassionate to all and especially to the poor and disenfranchised. Recognizing our own dependence on God and on others, and trusting in His providence, we engage in active service to the poor and to those with special needs such as the elderly and youth, the ill and the imprisoned. With gratitude to those who share their means to help us accomplish our Franciscan mission, we seek also to exercise a wise and careful stewardship of the institution's resources. We commit ourselves to honesty and integrity in our work, accept personal responsibility for our actions, and exercise high ethical standards in our personal and professional lives.

A Community of Faith and Prayer. The Saint Francis community, while respecting the religious beliefs and traditions of others, seeks to listen to the Word of God and to observe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The University strives to promote the spiritual growth and development of its member and invites all to gather in prayer and worship and, when possible, to participate in the Eucharist and in the sacramental life of the Church. The University is devoted to the Catholic Church and its leaders and strives to serve the educational and spiritual needs of the Church's clergy, religious, and laity.

A Spirit of Simplicity and Joy. Imitating Francis, who called himself the herald of the Great King and the troubadour of God, the Saint Francis community celebrates life in simplicity and joy. With good humor and common sense, we share our stories and teach by good example. We also extend courtesy and hospitality to all guests and to all who wish to join this community.

Franciscan Presence. The University gratefully acknowledges the vision, sacrifice, and zeal of our Franciscan founders and of the friars who have served the campus community loyally over the years. We

strive to emulate the Franciscan values evident in their ministry. Franciscan presence also encompasses all men and women of good will who have been associated with the University and whose lives and work exemplify the ideals of Saint Francis. We encourage and promote these values for future generations, knowing that as long as the spirit of Francis of Assisi continues to animate this community of learners, Saint Francis University will be graced with Franciscan presence.

In an age of complexity, the simplicity of the message of St. Francis of Assisi has more appeal than ever before. These guiding principles of the Franciscans aren't just ideals to be admired, but values to be lived.

SFU Vision:

Saint Francis University is the Catholic university of choice for high-ability students who seek an authentic, academically rigorous, interactive learning experience where they can grow intellectually, spiritually, morally, and socially. Students seek out Saint Francis for its ability to combine the values and vision of a liberal arts education with learning goals that are relevant to the economic needs of society.

Saint Francis University is recognized as a vital strategic partner – regionally, nationally, and internationally – establishing strong relationships by seeking collaborators to nurture and expand the University’s mission, vision, and strategic goals while contributing to a global vision of societal good brought about by the exercise of effective servant-leadership principles.

Saint Francis University’s facilities are designed to enhance and raise to the highest level of capability its nationally-recognized leadership programs in business, health care, science, and the humanities.

Saint Francis University engages in continuous improvements in organizational effectiveness and efficiency at all levels – driven by internal and external assessments – to promote exceptional stewardship of its human and financial resources.

General Education Program: “Ethical Citizenship for the 21st Century”:

General Education Philosophy. Through our General Education program, *Ethical Citizenship for the 21st Century*, you’ll build for yourself a solid academic base, establish critical thinking skills, a love for learning, and a strong moral foundation—essential tools for your success in today’s world. The program extends beyond the classroom to include lectures, presentations, performances, service projects and other educational activities. The result is an educational experience that is diverse and practical, and at the same time integrated and focused.

Inner Core (36 credits required)

Outer Core: General Education Thematic Minor or Open Program -- Fifteen credits (five 3-credit courses) in a General Education Thematic Minor OR the Open Program, distributed in five categories, as follows:

- Category 1: Ethics
- Category 2: Science and Quantitative Literacy
- Category 3: Diversity and Communications
- Category 4: Social Systems
- Category 5: CORE 407 - Senior Keystone Seminar

Total Ethical Citizenship credits: 51

- **Community Enrichment Series** - A wide-range of cultural events are also integrated into the GED curriculum as CES credits. By attending a lecture, concert, theatrical performance, or other

select events on campus, students can receive community enrichment credits towards completion of their degree.

- **Writing Competency Examination** - The writing exam is designed to “assess ability to write a clear, developed, and organized essay”. Passage of the exam is a requirement for graduation, and most students take the WCE in their Junior year.
- **Wellness Initiatives** - Students explore the 7 dimensions of health and wellness (physical, social, emotional, environmental, spiritual, intellectual, and occupational) while completing a online portfolio of wellness artifacts in the first two years of their education.
- **Summer Reading Program** - One of the first activities incoming classes participate in each year is the Summer Reading Program. For the program, we select a meaningful, thought-provoking (and interesting!) book for the campus community. The book is then incorporated into a year-long slate of activities in the classroom and beyond.
- **Study Abroad and Service Learning** - The General Education program also helps to enhance our study abroad and service learning initiatives through exploration of foreign languages and Franciscan values.

Values: Develop an understanding of the goals of Franciscan higher education and examine one’s own values in light of those goals.

- Understand the complexities underlying moral and ethical questions and the consequences of choices we make as individuals and as members of communities.
- Develop an understanding of the importance of human and cultural diversity.
- Develop a commitment to life-long learning and to sharing our skills and abilities through community service.

Skills : Demonstrate skills in communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, information literacy, and responsible citizenship.

- Develop the skills necessary for effective communication in a variety of formal and informal contexts.
- Demonstrate proficiency in mathematical reasoning and quantitative literacy.
- Develop critical reasoning skills and abilities.
- Effectively conduct research using discipline-appropriate materials and methods.
- Develop the collaborative and leadership skills necessary for exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a participatory democracy.

Knowledge: Develop a broad conceptual foundation in various fields of knowledge and make interdisciplinary connections.

- Demonstrate knowledge in the traditional liberal arts and sciences, with attention to primary source materials, multicultural issues, and interdisciplinary topics.
- Develop historical perspective across and within disciplines, finding the connections among different ideas, courses, and majors.
- Develop a conceptual foundation in economic, political, and social systems.
- Cultivate an understanding of processes and concepts used in science and technology.
- Develop an appreciation of the visual arts, music, theatre, and literature through creative expression, performance, and analysis of artistic works.
- Develop an understanding of key elements of personal health and wellness, major health care issues the well-being of communities.

One of the unique things about the General Education curriculum at Saint Francis is that you can choose to target your general education requirements to earn a **General Education Thematic Minor**. Through a fifteen-credit sequence of courses that focus on a common theme related to the [Franciscan Mission of](#)

[Saint Francis University](#), students may declare that GETM minor and have it listed as such on their transcripts.

Topics include:

- Active Citizenship
- Global Community
- Science, Technology, and Society
- Social Justice and Peacemaking
- Sustainability and the Environment
- Utopian and Dystopian Visions
- Women, Family, and the Community

Revised General Education Goals & Objectives. (Approved May 2017)

GOAL 1: Understand moral and ethical questions.

- Objective 1a: Identify, examine and defend a solution to an ethical dilemma.
- Objective 1b: Examine how Franciscanism addresses moral and ethical questions.

GOAL 2: Demonstrate an understanding of and appreciation for cultural diversity.

- Objective 2a: Explore and articulate multiple perspectives on race, ethnicity, social class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, national origin, verbal behavior, age, and religion.
- Objective 2b: Examine and explain the ethical and societal implications of specific diversity perspectives.

GOAL 3: Build the foundations for commitment to lifelong learning, personal well-being, and community service.

- Objective 3a: Foster curiosity, skepticism, initiative, and desire for deeper learning.
- Objective 3b: Develop a commitment to personal wellness.
- Objective 3c: Share skills and abilities for the betterment of the community.

GOAL 4: Develop effective communication skills.

- Objective 4a: State, develop, and support a clear thesis in a communication context.
- Objective 4b: Adapt language, communication style, and media for an intended audience and purpose.

GOAL 5: Demonstrate proficiency in quantitative literacy and scientific reasoning.

- Objective 5a: Interpret and communicate mathematical and statistical arguments.
- Objective 5b: Solve mathematical and statistical problems applicable to civic and professional contexts.
- Objective 5c: Understand and apply major scientific methods, theories, and principles.

GOAL 6: Develop critical and creative skills, abilities, and reasoning.

- Objective 6a: Analyze evidence, statements, and alternative interpretations and use these to synthesize multiple points of view in the creation of an argument.
- Objective 6b: Critically evaluate sources and source information using discipline-related standards in order to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information.
- Objective 6c: Demonstrate an understanding of at least one form of artistic expression.

GOAL 7: Conduct research using discipline-appropriate materials and methods.

- Objective 7a: Articulate specific research questions.
- Objective 7b: Identify and access information necessary to answer research questions.
- Objective 7c: Communicate research results in an effective and ethical manner.

GOAL 8: Understand the demands of active citizenship.

- Objective 8a: Identify relevant theories and solutions to contemporary domestic and international social, economic, and political issues.
- Objective 8b: Work collaboratively with others to promote social justice, being aware of the roles played by power, privilege, and subordination.
- Objective 8c: Evaluate the significance of historical events and documents within the United States and worldwide.

Executive Summary:

SFU submitted its authorization form and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge on July 14, 2017. The President and Provost of the University both supported our participation in the program. Since then, we have conducted our fall voter registration drive. The fall voter registration drive began, as always, during Constitution Days in September. We have also assembled a steering committee to assist with the planning and implementation of related programming in the future. Dr. Joseph Melusky, Professor of Political Science and Director of the SFU CSG&L coordinated the registration drive, recruited various faculty, staff, and student stakeholders to serve on the steering committee, and drafted this, our first, action plan.

Leadership:

Dr. Melusky will continue to coordinate voter registration and related activities. He will chair the steering committee and will seek members' advice regarding future planning and effective student outreach. He will also seek the committee's help in executing resulting plans. The committee will meet at least twice per year to discuss plans for the fall and spring voter registration drives. The committee will also discuss membership and related matters.

The steering committee (working group) consists of the following members: Bobby Anderson (Director, Center for Student Engagement and Leadership Development), Dr. Denise Damico (Chairperson, Department of History and Political Science), Lisa Georgiana (Director, Center for Service and Learning), Emily Vargo (Assistant Director and Policy Analyst, Shields School of Business, Knee Center for the Study of Occupational Regulation), Dr. Pete Skoner (Associate Provost), Allana Wilson (Director of Public Relations and Policy Analyst, Shields School of Business, Knee Center for the Study of Occupational Regulation), Rob Young (Assistant Vice President for Government Relations), and two students, Randall Frye (Student Government Association Vice President) and Marcus Mihelcic (Student Government Association President).

Commitment:

Fr. Malachi Van Tassell T.O.R., Ph.D., SFU President, and Dr. Wayne Powel, Provost, both supported the decision to join the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in July of 2017. Additional commitment is reflected by the SFU General Education Program's explicit dedication to promoting "Citizenship for the 21st Century." In addition to providing specific inner-core classes that promote civic learning and democratic engagement (e.g., American National Government, United States History, etc.), the outer core offers students an opportunity to complete a thematic minor in "Active Citizenship." The Community Enrichment Series provides another vehicle through which lectures, panel discussions, debates, guest speakers, films, and so on can be used to address ongoing political developments and related topics. The General Education Program's objectives include developing "the collaborative and leadership skills necessary for exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a participatory democracy" and developing "a conceptual foundation in economic, political, and social systems." Such explicit references underscore SFU's institutional commitment to promoting civic learning and democratic engagement.

Landscape:

Current programming seeks to enhance civic learning and to promote engaged citizenship through democratic participation. As mentioned, the SFU General Education program (“Ethical Citizenship for the 21st Century”) includes courses that specifically and explicitly address topics involving the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the American political system, foundational documents (e.g., The Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, the *Federalist Papers*, landmark Supreme Court decisions, etc.), separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, campaigns and elections, voting and voters, turnout and information levels, the Electoral College, apportionment and districting, and much additional relevant information. See, for example, American National Government, U.S. History 1 and 2, to cite just a few directly relevant courses.

In addition, panel presentations and plenary sessions are offered frequently on topics related to political campaigns. For example, every four years the SFU Ethics Institute sponsors a panel on “Ethical Issues in the Presidential Election.” The 2016 panel included faculty members from Political Science, History, Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Communications. The General Education program offered Community Enrichment Series (CES) credit for students who attended. The program, once again, drew a capacity crowd.

SFU is also known for its sponsorship of Mock National Conventions. Students staged the first mock convention in 1960. These events have become campus and community traditions, with mock conventions being staged every four years for the party that does not currently occupy the White House. As such, the 2016 mock convention was a Republican one. Students role play, serving as campaign managers, members of various committees (Platform Committee, Media Committee, Rules and Credentials Committee, etc.), and as delegates. Featured speakers included former PA Governor Tom Corbett, Chairman of the PA Republican State Committee Robert A. Gleason, Jr., former U.S. Representative Bud Shuster (R-PA), a state senator, a former state representative, and several county commissioners. Student “delegates” (including students from area high schools and some returning SFU alumni) nominated John Kasich for the presidency and Paul Ryan for the vice presidency.

To cite just one additional example, every September the CSG&L, with the help of the Pre-Law Club and the History and Political Science Department, offers “Constitution Day(s)” programming. Constitution Days were celebrated at Saint Francis University on September 18 and 19, 2017. Programs and activities were sponsored by the SFU CSG&L, the Department of History and Political Science, and the Pre-Law and History Clubs. Constitution Day commemorates the conclusion of the constitutional convention in 1787, the signing of the proposed Constitution by thirty-nine of the delegates in attendance, and the sending of the document to the states for debate and ratification.

Two hundred eighteen pocket copies of the U.S. Constitution were distributed on campus and in the surrounding area to high school and junior high school students. Members of the SFU community were invited to participate in a variety of activities.

On Monday, September 18, our 2017 Voter Registration Drive began. Information about registration procedures, deadlines, absentee ballot requests, and more were distributed via campus-wide e-mail. Hard copies of voter registration forms and absentee-ballot applications remained available at the SFU Center for the Study of Government and Law area in Scotus Hall.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Keith Pesto opened the day with his presentation on “Presidents Behaving Badly.” Following Judge Pesto’s remarks, a variety of “on the go” activities were offered in Padua Lounge throughout the day.

Students and other members of the University community participated in a few surveys. The following results may be of interest:

"America's Priorities: State Your Case in Six Words"

Respondents were asked this question: "If you had six words to express your thoughts on America's priorities -- or your thoughts on the U.S. Constitution -- what would you say?" Responses included the following: "Life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" and "What are high crimes and misdemeanors?"

"Which Founding Father Are You?"

Forty respondents completed surveys to determine which Founding Father they most closely resembled. Results showed that James Madison of Virginia came in first, followed by George Mason, Roger Sherman, Elbridge Gerry, Ben Franklin and George Washington (in a two-way tie), James Wilson, and John Rutledge.

"Are You Smart Enough to Be an American Citizen?"

One hundred forty nine respondents answered ten questions that were randomly drawn from a list of questions that people seeking American Citizenship must answer to pass the government's naturalization test. A "passing" score is 60% (six out of 10). The mean score for SFU respondents was 7.26. Overall results were positive. "Are you smart enough to be an American citizen?" The answer from the SFU community was "Yes!"

Our "Constitutional Tip Jar" fund raiser invited participants to "vote" for their favorite amendment by depositing some loose change in labeled jars. The Fifth Amendment (protecting against deprivations of life, liberty, or property without due process of law) received the most support, edging out the First Amendment (protecting freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly). The Fifth Amendment's margin of victory was just two cents!

Professor Jelani Jefferson Exum delivered a lecture titled "Overcriminalized and Undervalued: The Consequences of Purposeless Punishment" to more than 160 students and faculty in JFK Auditorium on Monday, September 18, 2017. Prof. Exum is Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Toledo. Prof. Exum's lecture was jointly sponsored by the Knee Center for the Study of Occupational Regulation, the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University, and the John Templeton Foundation. Thanks to Dr. Ed Timmons, Associate Professor of Economics and Director of the Knee Center for the Study of Regulation, we were able to include this event as part of our Constitution Day programming. To view the lecture visit <https://youtu.be/JoeiX8wO2gA>.

Dr. Joseph Melusky moderated a roundtable discussion, "To Run A Constitution 2017: Interns' Stories from the Field" (September 19). Ryan Cox (intern with PA State Rep. Judy Ward, R, 81st), Elise Dumouchelle (2017 Ann Eppard Congressional Scholar and Intern, intern with U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster, R, PA 9th), Marcus Mihelcic (intern with the Cambria County District Attorneys' Office), Matt Nichol (Washington Internship Institute program intern with the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq, Washington, D.C.), Hannah Orlosky (intern with the Cambria County Public Defender's Office), and Dylan Soule (intern with the Massachusetts Republican party, Boston, MA) discussed their experiences.

As indicated above, our campus voter registration drives (one in the fall and one in the spring) begin with a campus-wide e-mail announcement to all students, faculty, and staff. The announcement includes an informational attachment that provides dates, deadlines, addresses and links for those who want to register to vote (locally, elsewhere in Pennsylvania, or back home in another state) or to request absentee ballots. The attachment also includes information about casting a more informed vote (how to match your issue positions with those of candidates, how to fact-check claims made by candidates, etc.). Follow-up e-mail

messages are sent to faculty asking them to encourage students to read the original message and to register to vote. Hard copies of registration materials are also made available to interested parties. A copy of the fall 2017 Voter registration attachment appears below:

VOTER REGISTRATION & VOTING – GENERAL INFORMATION

- In Pennsylvania, you can now register to vote online, in person, or by mail.
- To register to vote online, go to www.register.votespa.com.
- The **deadline to register** to vote in the November 7, 2017 election is **Tuesday, October 10, 2017**. If you are registering by mail, your registration form must be *postmarked* by October 10.
- You can also use the electronic (or hard-copy) voter-registration form if you want to change your party, name, or address.
- You can register to vote in your home county or in the county where you are going to school. The residency requirement in Pennsylvania is 30 days. As such, SFU students can register to vote in Cambria County.
- Hard copies of voter-registration forms and absentee-ballot applications are on the SFU Center for the Study of Government & Law (CSG&L) table near Scotus 316. We can supply you with a form, but you will have to mail it yourself. Addresses of county voter registration offices are on the form.
- When you go to the polling place to vote on Election Day, be sure to bring an acceptable form of ID. The ID should include your photo and name. If you are a first-time voter at a polling place, you will be required to show an acceptable ID or your voter registration card.
- If you will be away from home on Election Day and need an absentee ballot, you can request one by mail. You can get the form from www.votespa.com or get one at the CSG&L table near Scotus 316. We can supply the form, but you will have to mail it yourself.
- The **deadline to apply for an absentee ballot** is Tuesday before Election Day (i.e., **October 31, 2017**). Your absentee ballot application form must be *received* by your voter registration office no later than 5:00 p.m. All voted ballots must be returned by 5:00 p.m. on Friday before Election Day (i.e., **November 3, 2017**). Return the absentee-ballot application to your County Board of Elections. The address and telephone number can be found by using the County Information Link at www.votespa.com.
- The following web sites may be of interest to you:
 - <http://www.votespa.com> (Pennsylvania Department of State web site contains information about voting systems in every Pennsylvania county. Includes information about voter registration procedures, absentee ballots, acceptable forms of voter ID, finding polling places, and checking on the status of voter registration. If you have questions, this is the site for you!)
 - PA citizens can text “PA” to “2Vote” (28683) to receive a link to VotesPA.
 - <https://www.rockthevote.com> (Encourages people to register and vote. Enables you to obtain registration forms online and to obtain an absentee ballot. **If you are a resident of another state, go to this site.**)
 - <http://www.vote411.org> (League of Women Voters' national Web site offers voter-related information for all states.)
 - <https://www.isidewith.com> (Take the survey and match your issue positions with those of the parties and candidates.)

- <http://www.politifact.com> (Site devoted to fact-checking the blizzard of assertions falling daily from the mouths of presidential hopefuls, their staffs, their TV ads, and YouTube videos. The site is run by Bill Adair, Washington bureau chief for the St. Petersburg Times.)
- <http://www.factcheck.org> (Site attempts to hold politicians accountable with Annenberg fact checks.)

Information provided by the SFU Center for the Study of Government & Law, Department of History & Political Science, and the Pre-Law Club.

Assessment Data. As noted, Pennsylvania now permits residents to register to vote online, by mail, or in person. Online registration makes it easier for people to register to vote. One small administrative downside is that it is somewhat difficult for us to measure how successful our voter registration efforts are. We can no longer count the number of registration forms that we distributed and use this number as an estimate of how many students registered to vote. Many, probably most, now register to vote online. Nevertheless, we have every intention of continuing to remind students about registration procedures and deadlines and we will continue to make relevant materials available to them.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) report may contain some information that will be relevant and instructive. We also look forward to the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) from Tufts University when it includes information about SFU student registration and voting rates. One additional source of information is a survey that the SFU General Education program administers to students enrolled in first-year seminar classes. An election survey question is, “Have you voted in these past (presidential or mid-term) elections?” Here are the results from the two most recent presidential elections. 2012 presidential election: YES – 39.7%, NO – 60.3%; 2016 presidential election: YES -- 62.5%, NO – 37.5%. Turnout among SFU students was considerably higher in 2016 than in 2012. According to “Strengthening American Democracy: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates among College Students,” 48.3% of undergraduate students at 1,023 colleges and universities voted in the 2016 presidential election. This was 11.9 percentage points lower than the national rate among all eligible voters. Based on the SFU General Education program survey, SFU student turnout in 2016 was relatively high.

GOALS:

- Increase student registration rates by 10% from 2012 to 2024 (as measured by NSLVE report and the SFU General Education program survey).
- Increase student voting rates by 10% from 2012 to 2024 (as measured by NSLVE report and the SFU General Education program survey).
- Use institutional web sites (departmental pages, OrgSync, etc.) to distribute voter registration information and materials.
- Use institutional social media to distribute voter registration information and materials.
- Involve faculty teaching first-year seminar classes in encouraging students to register and vote.
- Offer CES-credit sessions at which the Director of the Cambria County Election Board discusses voter registration procedures. Dr. Joseph Melusky, Director of the SFU CSG&L and a judge of elections in neighboring Blair County for more than 20 years, will participate as well.
- Incorporate TurboVote into voter registration materials. Currently, students who are not from Pennsylvania are instructed to use the “Rock the Vote” web site to obtain information about registering to vote in other states. TurboVote appears to be a powerful and user-friendly alternative.
- Host debate-watch and election-night gatherings with interested students at a campus location.

- Determine if SGA, resident assistants, and other student leaders can contribute to voter registration.

STRATEGY:

Dr. Joseph Melusky will continue to coordinate voter registration efforts. Voter registration drives will continue to be conducted two times each year, once in the fall prior to the general election and once in the spring prior to the primaries. The fall registration drive will commence during Constitution Day(s) activities. The Steering Committee will meet to discuss and plan registration efforts. Steering Committee members will assist with implementation and publicity too.

REPORTING:

The Action Plan will be shared initially with the President, the Provost, the Dean of Arts and Letters, the Dean of General Education, and members of the Steering Committee. We will explore development of a CSG&L link that could also be used for this purpose. Information can also be made available through OrgSync (e.g., the Pre-Law Club portal).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

Voter registration drives have been a part of what we do at SFU for quite some time. We do a lot. We seek to do more and to do it as effectively as possible. We regard this Action Plan as a work in progress. We expect it will evolve as we move forward. We look forward to receiving SFU-specific NSLVE data in the future and expect that this information will inform our ongoing work.