



Action Plan: Increasing Student Engagement in Elections

I. Executive Summary

- A. This plan was developed in the spring semester of 2018 by Robert Pyne and Ellen Socha for the Norman Miller Center for Peace, Justice & Public Understanding at St. Norbert College, with the support of the Coalition of Voting Organizations in Brown County, the Lean Process Team at St. Norbert College, and the City Clerk of De Pere.
- B. This plan focuses on efforts around public elections. Broader institutional and departmental strategies for civic engagement are addressed in the college's Strategic Plan, the Civic Action Plan, and the Mission and Student Affairs Strategic Plan.
- C. The Norman Miller Center for Peace, Justice & Public Understanding is regarded by St. Norbert College as the lead party responsible for student voter registration and education. We have led student voter registration efforts and tracked progress in every major election from 2012 to present.
- D. Past efforts:
 1. In 2012, we registered 73 students to vote, designed a new system for creating acceptable photo IDs (which turned out not to be needed), and drove 70 students to the polls. According to data from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) in its National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), we exceeded national averages as 76.6% of SNC students were registered to vote in 2012, and 58.6% actually voted in the November election.
 2. In 2016, we registered 175 students to vote, implemented the new photo ID system, creating over 100 substitute student IDs for voting, and drove 75 to the polls. Nevertheless, both registration rates and voting rates

declined, according to our NSLVE report. Our registration rate fell to 65.4% and only 50.6% of students voted. Both numbers are very near national averages.

3. In light of these results, we hope to increase in 2018 both the number of students registered and the percentage of students actually voting.
- E. 2018 Goals: Through educational programs, engaging activities, and institutional structures to promote civic engagement and voting, we aim to:
1. Register over 200 students to vote
 2. Insure that at least 90% of the entering class is registered to vote
 3. See 60% of St. Norbert College students vote in the November election.
 4. We will also ensure that all students have ready access to information about requirements for voting in Wisconsin or in their home states, and that they have easy access to approved photo IDs required for voting in Wisconsin.

II. Leadership

A. Coordinating

1. Robert Pyne, Senior Director for Community Engagement and Director of the Norman Miller Center
2. Ellen Socha, Brinn Anderson, and Milena Pirman (all student Community Organizers at the Norman Miller Center).

B. Additional Partners

1. On campus
 - a) Other student workers and volunteers from the Norman Miller Center
 - b) Mike Peckham, Director of Residential Education and Housing
 - c) Campus Card Services
 - d) SNC Lean Process Team
 - e) The Gap Experience office
 - f) Coordinators of the Gateway Seminar
 - g) Faculty from the Political Science department
 - h) Other student leaders to be determined
2. Off-campus
 - a) Volunteers from the Coalition of Voting Organizations in Brown County (COVO), with Kevin Welch coordinating
 - b) The City Clerk of De Pere, Shana Ledvina
 - c) Wisconsin Campus Compact (Campus Election Engagement Project)
 - d) All In Campus Democracy Challenge

III. Commitment

- A. According to its Mission Statement, St. Norbert College, “a Catholic liberal arts college embracing the Norbertine ideal of communio, provides an educational environment that fosters intellectual, spiritual and personal development.” Each element of that statement contributes to our understanding of civic engagement.
 - 1. As a Catholic college, St. Norbert upholds the sacred dignity of all persons, seeking truth through an ongoing dialogue among faith, reason and culture, and utilizing knowledge to promote a Gospel vision of justice.
 - 2. Our understanding of the liberal arts calls us to dialogue with diverse cultures, perspectives and beliefs, cultivate a love of lifelong learning inspired by excellent teaching, and think critically as responsible members of society.
 - 3. The Norbertine tradition calls us to pray and reflect communally and individually, welcome all to participate, seek peace and reconciliation in the spirit of St. Norbert, and respond to the needs of our global and local communities.
- B. Given the widespread perception that some political actors were attempting to suppress the voting rates of American college students, the board of trustees and administration of St. Norbert College asked the Norman Miller Center for Peace, Justice, and Public Understanding to ensure that SNC students could easily register to vote and be informed about voting.
- C. A permanent web page, maintained by the Norman Miller Center, makes available information about voting. <https://www.snc.edu/millercenter/voting.html>
- D. Our voter registration and voter education projects are highly visible on campus, and always publicized through press releases to the local media.

IV. Landscape

- A. Service is an integral part of the St. Norbert College mission. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has selected St. Norbert College as one of 240 U.S. colleges and universities to receive its 2010 Community Engagement classification. St. Norbert College has also been admitted to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll since we first applied for the designation in 2010, and for four years we have been admitted to the Honor Roll with Distinction for our strong institutional commitment to service and compelling campus-community partnerships that produce measurable results for the community.
- B. The four departments in the area of Community Engagement provide the bulk of the existing internal infrastructure for engaging students in the community:

1. The Norman Miller Center for Peace, Justice and Public Understanding addresses student understanding and passion, serving the local community through advocacy and special events open to the public. The Norman Miller Center seeks to connect individuals and organizations to the common good while capitalizing on their existing interests and abilities.
 2. The Sturzl Center for Community Service and Learning addresses student experience and understanding, serving the local community by promoting and nurturing service-learning programs and community-engaged courses throughout the college and strengthening community partnerships. The Sturzl Center staff meet regularly with service leaders on and off campus to understand their needs, support their efforts and deepen the impact of their collaborations.
 3. The Gap Experience program is a full-year experience for students looking for an alternative start to their college career. The Gap Experience is built on three central pillars: rigorous academic coursework; service-learning; and leadership training through adventure challenge. The specific focus of the program is to introduce students to a broad array of social justice issues, and through our travels, a combination of traditional academic study and service-learning with select community partners, students learn more about how their gifts and talents align with the needs of the world, all while earning full academic credit.
 4. The Norbertine Volunteer Community, a ministry of St. Norbert Abbey, contributes to the college's culture of service as a highly visible, sustained program with offices on campus, modeling post-graduate volunteer service in the local community.
- C. SNC's Academic Service-Learning program, supported by both Academic Affairs and the Sturzl Center, provides training and support for faculty and community partners. Twenty-nine faculty members have completed the one year Faculty Fellows for Community Engagement mentoring program. Certifying courses that employ academic service-learning with the CENG (Community Engagement) designation reinforces the distinctive value of these courses at the college
- D. As for the campus political climate, most SNC students (perhaps predictably) identify themselves near the middle of the spectrum. In 2007, the last year for which we have this data, less than 1% of students described themselves as "far left" or "far right." About 25% saw themselves as "liberal," and the same number identified as "conservative." 50% said that politically they were "middle of the road."

V. Goals

- A. Achieve and maintain a registered voter voting rate of 85%

- B. Achieve and maintain a voting registration rate of 80% for all eligible students
- C. Insure that at least 90% of the entering class is registered to vote
- D. Register at least 200 students to vote
- E. Achieve an overall voting rate of 60% in November 2018 and 70% in November 2020.
- F. We will also ensure that all students have ready access to information about requirements for voting in Wisconsin or in their home states, and that they have easy access to approved photo IDs required for voting in Wisconsin.

VI. Strategy

- A. In order to ensure that over 90% of the entering class is registered to vote, we will embed voter registration and voter education in the Gateway Seminar, which is required for all first year students.
 - 1. Gateway leaders will be trained by COVO.
 - 2. Materials will be prepared by COVO and the Norman Miller Center, then distributed to leaders and students through Google Classroom.
 - 3. Before September 20, students will be asked to take steps to make sure they are registered to vote.
 - 4. On September 20, Gateway leaders will:
 - a) Check for validation of student voter registration in groups of 15
 - b) Identify students who need help registering, or who have questions they cannot answer
 - c) Lead students to voter education event in Bemis International Center, where those needing help will meet with better trained volunteers from COVO and others will take part in one of four breakout sessions.
 - 5. After September 20, students from Gateway Seminar will be given resources and referred to the NMC or Campus Card Services with any additional questions.
- B. In order to register over 200 students to vote, we will:
 - 1. Include numbers from Gateway registrations assisted by leaders
 - 2. Train students from the Norman Miller Center along with staff from Campus Card Services, then coordinate times when they will assist with highly publicized registration drive.
- C. In order to ensure that students have proper photo identification, we will:
 - 1. Confirm that our present practice of making additional custom student IDs for voting still conforms with standards set by the Government Accountability Board.

2. Ensure that Campus Card Services is prepared and equipped to create the custom IDs.
 3. Publicize the state requirement for photo IDs, along with student alternatives.
- D. In order to increase the number of registered students actually voting, in September we will gather leaders from multiple student organizations to plan activities, educational programs, and (perhaps) inter-residence hall contests.
- E. We will report the results of these efforts internally to the Vice President of Mission and Student Affairs and the President's Office, and externally to COVO, WICC (CEEP), and the All In Campus Democracy Challenge. Results will also be shared externally via social media.

VII. Evaluation

- A. Progress will be measured by reviewing NSLVE data and analyzing the results after each election compared to prior years' results
- B. Student surveys may be distributed about their own personal habits with regard to attitudes/habits towards voting and elections.
- C. Review and reflection will take place from organizers/workers involved in executing this action plan.

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