

Sewanee: The University of the South 2026 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Sewanee Democratic Engagement Initiative, SewaneeVotes!

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Dr. Lydia Reinig, Director of Dialogue Across Difference

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Executive Summary

At Sewanee: The University of the South, democratic engagement efforts are coordinated through the Office of Civic Engagement, the Democratic Engagement Initiative, and Dialogue Across Difference. This cross-campus collaboration, supported by students, staff, faculty, and community partners, advances Sewanee's commitment to civic learning, informed participation, and dialogue across political differences. Sewanee's work reflects the institution's mission to develop leaders for social change and its decade-long investment in democratic engagement, including participation in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge since 2016, and NSLVE since 2014.

The University's democratic engagement work has expanded steadily over time. Formal programming began in 2018, and later that year, SewaneeVotes! was launched as a student-driven hub to support voter registration, education, and turnout. These efforts continue to grow through sustained leadership across academic departments, student organizations, residential life, and community-engaged learning programs. Events such as voter registration drives, National Voter Education Week activities, Dessert and Democracy sessions, Constitution Day programming, and Dialogue Wall tabling create accessible opportunities for students to learn, reflect, and participate year-round.

This 2026 Campus Democratic Engagement Action Plan was created by the Office of Civic Engagement with input from campus partners and student leaders. Planning contributors represent multiple programs and departments across the Academic Affairs and Student Life divisions, and all programming is open to the full Sewanee community. Feedback was gathered through dialogue programming, student engagement events, and ongoing civic education initiatives to ensure that the plan reflects student needs and experiences.

The purpose of this plan is to strengthen nonpartisan civic learning and increase student voter registration, education, turnout, and democratic engagement throughout the 2026 election cycle, including local and primary elections. The plan outlines four topline goals: (1) increasing voter

registration and turnout; (2) deepening cross-campus partnerships; (3) fostering constructive dialogue across political differences; and (4) integrating democratic engagement into the academic experience. This work builds on NSLVE insights, Sewanee's strong culture of community engagement, and a commitment to equipping all students with the civic knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong democratic participation.

Implementation of the plan will occur at Sewanee: The University of the South from January 12 to December 15, 2026. Progress will be coordinated across campus partners, with primary responsibility residing within the Office of Civic Engagement, SewaneeVotes! Initiative, and Dialogue Across Difference. Evaluation and ongoing refinement will occur throughout the year, and the plan will be formally reviewed and updated at the conclusion of the 2026 cycle in preparation for the next election cycle.

Leadership

Sewanee's on-campus Democratic Engagement Initiative, SewaneeVotes!, acts as a student organization to increase nonpartisan engagement in our democracy and student voter participation. The SewaneeVotes! coalition includes the following stakeholders:

Dr. Amy Patterson, Director of Office of Civic Engagement
Dr. Lydia Reinig, Director of Dialogue Across Difference
Joseph Davis, Coordinator for Student Programming
Olivia Moellering Baratas C'27, Democratic Engagement Site Leader
Mary Webster Burke C'26, Dialogue Across Difference Site Leader

This work would not be possible without the support of others across campus. The Office of Civic Engagement and its Democratic Engagement Initiative collaborate with the following internal campus groups and external organizations:

Faculty/Staff

Drs. Sean Patrick O'Rourke and Melody Lehn, Center for Speaking and Listening Co-Directors
Dr. Terry Papillon, Former Dean of the College and current Professor of Rhetoric
Dr. Mila Dragojevic, Politics Department Chair
Dr. Amy Patterson, Professor of Politics
Nicky Campbell, Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students
Georgia Hewitt, Office Coordinator for the Office of Global Citizenship
John Shackelford, Director of Athletics

Student Leaders

Allison McCasland, Student Government Association President
Wyatt Bassow and Lillian Murphy, Greek Council Vice Presidents of Community Service
Naekaeyla Roach, NAACP President
Elizabeth Baker and Gavin Clark, Sewanee Debate Union President
Lily Mobley, Order of the Gown President
Lillian Boston and Sarah Myers, Bairnwick Women's Center Co-Directors

Allison Krob and Victoria Quintero, Peer Health Co-Directors

National Partnerships

ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge (external, national)
National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) (external, national)
TurboVote, presented by Democracy Works (external, national)
Students Learn, Students Vote (external, national)
Voter Friendly Campus (external, national)
Tennessee Campus Democracy Network (external, statewide)
CivicTN (external, statewide)
The Fourth Founding Project at Stanford University (external, small cohort of 11 universities)
Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP)
Bonner Network (internal, campus)
Canale Service and Leadership Interns (internal, campus)

Strengthening campus, local, and national partnerships:

Representatives from SewaneeVotes! have been in communication with the Director of Athletics, John Shackelford, to strengthen the relationship between Sewanee's Democratic Engagement Initiative and athletics. Mr. Shackelford has expressed interest in supporting this work and plans to sign the "Coaches Pledge" when it is available in January 2026.

Sewanee: The University of the South has never had a signatory to ALL IN's Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation. Representatives have been in communication with Vice-Chancellor Rob Pearigen and Provost Scott Wilson to strengthen the connection between Sewanee's Democratic Engagement Initiative and the Executive Offices. While we are still awaiting confirmation regarding the signing of the "Presidents' Pledge," we hope to have President Robert Pearigen sign the commitment to fully live out both our University mission and that of the Office of Civic Engagement.

Sewanee: The University of the South will continue to strengthen student voter engagement by deepening partnerships with local election officials. The campus liaison will coordinate events, share accurate election information, and explore opportunities for on-campus and absentee voting access. Student leaders, supported by faculty and staff, will carry out outreach and develop experiential learning opportunities, including serving as poll workers or participating in related internships. All activities will be documented and reviewed annually, with shared leadership to support continuity, sustainability, and ongoing improvement.

The Office of Civic Engagement and SewaneeVotes! sustain democratic engagement through shared leadership among staff, faculty, and student leaders. Key roles include the Coordinator for Student Programming, student leaders, faculty advisors, and coalition members from campus departments and student organizations. Potential successors are identified annually, and overlapping responsibilities, documentation, and mentorship ensure smooth transitions. New members receive onboarding and guidance, and leadership is distributed to prevent reliance on any single individual. The succession plan is reviewed annually or after major elections, with

post-election evaluations informing improvements. A formal, fully documented succession plan is still under development.

Commitment

Sewanee: The University of the South's motto is "Behold how good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity" from Psalm 133:1. We call this motto EQB, a name derived from the latin translation of this verse, and we define it as living with personal integrity, respecting the dignity of all, valuing freedom of thought and expression, demonstrating self-control, and developing trusting relationships. The University lives out EQB by strengthening our four core values: inquiry, community, flourishing and courage.

The Office of Civic Engagement's mission is to develop leaders for social change by engaging students, staff, faculty, and local, national, and international partners. The OCE also strives to uphold the University's four values. To uphold inquiry, we develop socially-engaged, collaborative, and reflective individuals committed to the exchange of knowledge for the common good. To uphold community, we cultivate and sustain inclusive relationships which provide belonging and appreciation of one another to create positive social change. To uphold flourishing, we build communities made up of caring individuals by seeing, hearing, and valuing others and ourselves, as a step toward offering caring, respectful, mutually beneficial forms of engagement. Finally, to uphold courage, we create inclusive spaces where individual experiences are celebrated; differing perspectives are encouraged; injustices are challenged, and vulnerability is valued.

Sewanee: The University of the South demonstrates its commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and community partnership through several key programs and collaborations, including:

- [Office of Civic Engagement](#) (OCE), the hub for civic learning and community partnerships that advances reciprocal engagement, service, and social impact.
- [SewaneeVotes!](#), a nonpartisan initiative providing voter registration support, absentee ballot guidance, and voter education for all students, including new and out-of-state voters.
- Partnerships with organizations such as the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, Voter Friendly Campus, Campus Election Engagement Project, CivicTN, and TurboVote, which strengthen voter engagement efforts across campus.
- [Recognition from ALL IN](#) for excellence in nonpartisan student voter engagement, including earning the highest student voter-registration rate among four-year institutions in Tennessee in 2022.
- [Community Engaged Learning](#) (CEL) and the Certificate in Community Engagement for Collaborative Change (CCECC), which integrate academic coursework with civic and community-based experiences.

- [A range of co-curricular service and leadership programs](#), such as Bonner Leaders, Canale Leaders, AmeriCorps partnerships, and volunteer initiatives that support regional nonprofits and community partners. These programs provide opportunities to build dialogue and civic skills, including the Dialogue Across Difference initiative and other programs fostering civil discourse and community collaboration.

Landscape

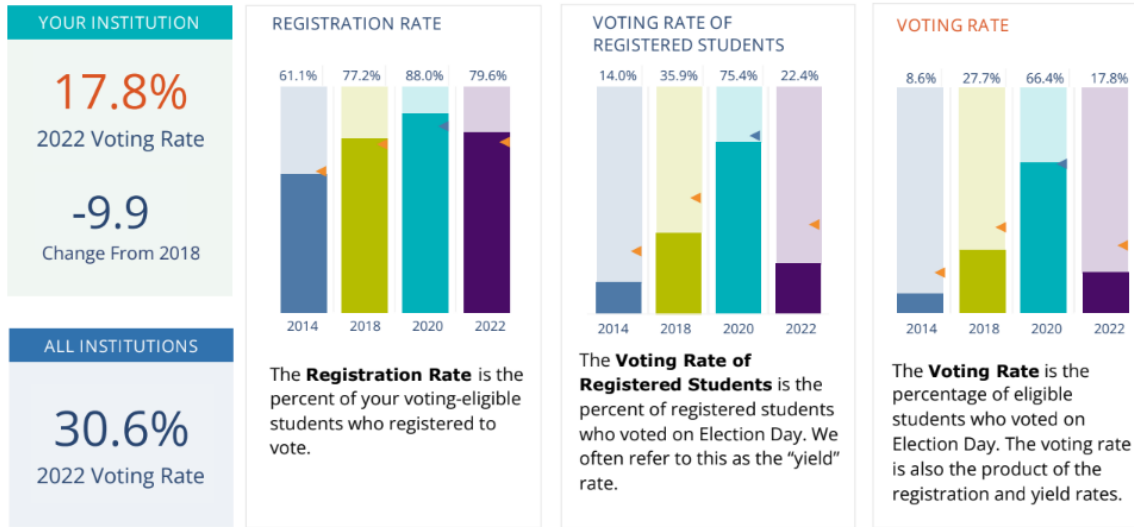
Sewanee: The University of the South is a private 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2016. Our institution has submitted nonpartisan democratic engagement action plans to ALL IN in the following years: 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022. Our institution has approximately 1800 students and represents the following institution types: Predominantly White Institution, Rural Serving Institution.

Recent reports from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) have played a central role in informing Sewanee's understanding of student voter engagement. NSLVE data provides critical insight into Sewanee's voter registration and turnout trends and offers national context by comparing Sewanee to other private four-year institutions. Sewanee's highest recent student participation occurred during the 2020 presidential election cycle, and NSLVE data continues to guide strategic planning within the Democratic Engagement Initiative and SewaneeVotes!.

NSLVE Data

We have yet to receive the 2024 NSLVE data, but have outlined our past 2022 data below. The decrease in voter participation between 2020 and 2022 is largely attributable to the heightened engagement typical of general elections relative to midterms.

Voting, Registration and Yield Rates



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Sewanee's past voter registration and voter turnout data (2020-2022) :

- 2022 Voting Rate: 17.8%
 - Compared to the national institutional average of 30.6% as measured by NSLVE
- 2022 Registration Rate: 79.6%
- 2020 Voting Rate: 66.4%
 - Compared to the national institutional average of 66% as measured by NSLVE
- 2020 Registration Rate: 88.0%
 - *We included these dates to highlight data from the most recent Midterm and General Elections.

Voting Data by Age-Group

- Voter participation among students aged 18–21 in the 2020 election increased by 145% compared to 2018.
- Voter participation among students aged 18–21 in the 2022 election was significantly lower than 2020.
- Voter participation among students aged 22–24 in the 2020 election increased by 155% compared to 2018.
- Voter participation among students aged 22–24 in the 2022 election was significantly lower than 2020.

Voting Data by Education Level

- Voter participation among undergraduate students in the 2020 election increased by 146% compared to 2018.
- Voter participation among undergraduate students in the 2022 election was significantly lower than 2020.
- Voter participation among graduate students (School of Theology) in the 2020 election increased by 8% compared to 2018.

- Voter participation among graduate students (School of Theology) in the 2020 election was significantly lower than 2020.

Undergraduate Voting Data by Class Year

- Voter participation among the freshmen class in the 2020 election increased by 192% compared to 2018.
- Voter participation among the sophomore class in the 2020 election increased by 144% compared to 2018.
- Voter participation among the upperclassman class (juniors, seniors) in the 2020 election increased by 123% compared to 2018.
- Compared with 2020, voter participation declined significantly across all class years in 2022.

Undergraduate Voting Data by Field of Study

- Voter participation among Natural Resources majors in the 2020 election increased by 150% compared to 2018.
- Voter participation among Biology majors in the 2020 election increased by 271% compared to 2018.
- 70% of English and History Majors voted in the 2020 elections.
- Voter participation among Visual and Performing Arts majors in the 2020 election increased by 74% compared to 2018.
- Despite a consistent increase in enrollment, mathematics and foreign language majors have historically failed to vote in midterms, based on NSLVE data in 2014 and 2018.
- While only 16 students are represented in this category, Religious Studies and Philosophy majors have failed to vote in the 2014 and 2018 midterms.
- Compared with 2020, voter participation declined significantly across all fields of study in 2022.

Sewanee does not collect data based on certain demographic breakdowns (i.e. sex, race, etc.)

In 2022 our institution won the following awards from ALL IN:

Tennessee Highest Registration Rate: 2-year

Our institution has earned the following seals from ALL IN:

2020: Silver

2018: Silver

Our institution has had students represented on ALL IN's Student Voting Honor Roll:

2025 - Annalise Eiffert C'25

We will update our action plan, including the landscape and goals sections, when we receive our 2024 NSLVE data.

In addition to barriers common to many college campuses, Sewanee experiences several challenges specific to its institutional context and student population:

Internal Barriers:

Geographic diversity and out-of-state voting complexity:

- A significant portion of Sewanee's undergraduates come from outside Tennessee, and many choose to vote in their home states. Managing varying registration deadlines, absentee-ballot rules, and ID requirements can be confusing for first-time and out-of-state voters. To support these students, SewaneeVotes! provides individualized voter-registration help, absentee-ballot instruction, deadline reminders, and connections to TurboVote resources.

Students ineligible to vote:

- International students and non-citizen permanent residents cannot vote, which requires Sewanee to offer civic education opportunities that extend beyond voting. Sewanee's Office of Civic Engagement (OCE) addresses this through Community Engaged Learning (CEL), civic-skills workshops, dialogue across difference, and opportunities for public-facing community work open to all students.

Limited transportation and rural location:

- Sewanee is located on the South Cumberland Plateau, where students often require transportation to reach early-voting sites or Election Day polling places off campus. Although Sewanee is currently exploring on-campus voting access with local election officials, transportation barriers remain a challenge. SewaneeVotes! helps mitigate this by providing support for early-voting planning.

Competing academic and residential commitments:

- Sewanee's rigorous academic culture and intensive residential life schedule can make it difficult for students to find time to vote, particularly when balancing coursework, athletics, and cocurricular involvement. To address this, SewaneeVotes! promotes early voting, provides "Plan Your Vote" tools, distributes absentee-ballot materials early, and coordinates with faculty and staff to incorporate civic reminders into campus communications.

Political climate and polarization:

- National polarization is reflected on campus, creating hesitation among some students to participate in political conversations. Sewanee addresses this through nonpartisan programming such as Dialogue Across Difference, student-led voter-education events, and OCE's civic-skill development sessions designed to create respectful, inclusive spaces for diverse viewpoints.

External Barriers:

State-level restrictions and policy variability:

- Tennessee maintains more restrictive voting laws than many students' home states, including limited early voting options compared with other regions. In Tennessee, you

must register to vote at least 30 days before the election. First-time voters who register by mail or online typically must appear in person to vote in their first election after registration becomes effective.

- Out-of-state absentee voting also varies greatly by state, making it difficult to standardize guidance. SewaneeVotes! relies on TurboVote, personalized advising, and state-specific voter-rights materials to ensure students receive accurate election information.

Rural election infrastructure:

- Like many rural counties, Franklin County operates a small number of polling locations. Although the number of Sewanee students eligible to vote in Franklin County is low, SewaneeVotes! helps students navigate these challenges by encouraging early voting and providing real-time information during Election Week.

Misinformation and inconsistent voter guidance:

- Students have occasionally received unclear or outdated information about acceptable voter identification or registration processes. Sewanee's Democratic Engagement Initiative addresses this through nonpartisan voter-rights education, clear digital resources, and partnerships with the County Election Commission.

Factors That Support Success:

Despite these challenges, several factors strengthen Sewanee's democratic engagement efforts:

Broad, institution-wide commitment:

- Sewanee's Democratic Engagement Initiative is supported collaboratively by the Office of Civic Engagement, Student Life, student leaders, and academic partners. This shared structure allows democratic engagement to reach students across curricular and co-curricular settings.

Strong community-engaged learning culture:

- With Community Engaged Learning (CEL) courses across disciplines and the Certificate in Community Engagement for Collaborative Change (CCECC), Sewanee integrates civic learning deeply into the curriculum. Many students participate in community-based projects, service roles, internships, and public-facing work that reinforce civic responsibility.

Partnerships with national organizations:

- Through All In Campus Democracy Challenge, Voter Friendly Campus, CEEP, CivicTN, and TurboVote, Sewanee accesses toolkits, training resources, and peer-campus networks that enhance the breadth and quality of democratic engagement programming.

High levels of student leadership:

- Student-facing programs such as SewaneeVotes!, Bonner Leaders, Canale Leaders, and civic-focused internships cultivate a pipeline of students who advance voter engagement efforts and help sustain programming year to year.

Culture of service and community stewardship:

- Sewanee's identity as a residential, community-oriented university fosters habits of civic participation. Many students are already engaged in service, dialogue, leadership positions, and community partnerships, strengthening the environment for democratic engagement.

Important dates to look forward to in the 2026-2027 year are:

- March, 2026: Primary Elections in certain states
 - Arkansas, Illinois, Mississippi, North Carolina*, Texas*
- Month of May, 2026: Primary Elections in certain states
 - Alabama*, Georgia*, Indiana, Ohio
- May 5, 2026: Franklin County Primary Elections
- August 6, 2026: State and Federal Primary Election/ Franklin County General Elections
- November 3, 2026: State and Federal General Election

*Note: *States representing the majority of the student body*

Goals

Our institution's nonpartisan democratic engagement goals are: (1) increasing voter registration and turnout; (2) deepening cross-campus partnerships; (3) fostering constructive dialogue across political differences; and (4) integrating democratic engagement into the academic experience.

For each goal, we have set out both a long term and a short term objective.

Goal 1: Increase voter participation in both federal and municipal elections by increasing student voter registration and voting rates in the 2024 through 2028 election cycle. Specifically, we hope to increase voter participation in the 2026 Midterms by at least 10%.

1. Our registration rate in 2022 was 79.6%. Based on this data, we are striving to have a 85% voter registration rate in 2026.
2. Our long-term goal is to have 90% of eligible voters registered and 80% voting rates for eligible voters in 2026.
3. Our voting rate in 2020 was 66.4%, and 17.8% in 2022. Our short term goal is to reduce this turnout gap between presidential and midterm elections by at least 15% in 2026. We aim to do this by implementing targeted outreach, education, and absentee ballot support specifically for the 2026 midterms.

Goal 2: Foster strategic partnerships with diverse student organizations and departments that connect student leadership to civic action and strengthens a culture of democratic engagement

across campus for all. Specifically, we hope to strengthen our relationship with our graduate students by partnering with the School of Theology for voter registration drives.

- Collaborate with specific organizations to promote events that help students realize the significant relationship between their vote and the issues they care about.
- Help students make connections between their engagement on campus and the national political landscape by working with new and existing student organizations to foster non-partisan awareness of policy issues.
- Grow our network of students, faculty, staff, and community members committed to Democratic Engagement.

Goal 3: Build capacity for bridging political differences by fostering more inclusive conversations around democratic engagement across campus through dialogue, deliberation, and voter education for the next two election cycles. Specifically, we hope to grow our partnership with Dialogue Across Difference and Sewanee Debate Union for midterm programming.

1. Work with Dialogue Across Difference Programs to create opportunities for students to thoughtfully engage with one another on contentious issues (i.e., using the Dialogue/Democracy Wall to understand the constantly evolving campus climate)
2. Provide ongoing voter education through twice-per-semester “Voter Educator Training” sessions to ensure students feel confident supporting their peers.
3. Ensure a representative attends every study-abroad information session each semester to share guidance and resources for voting while abroad.

Goal 4: Increase democratic engagement across the curriculum. Specifically, we hope to strengthen Democratic Engagement within the freshman class through Orientation programming.

1. Continue conversations with academic departments and faculty on ways in which they can incorporate democratic engagement in their curricula to strengthen voter education/civics education
2. Strengthen collaboration with courses currently designated as Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) courses and add to the growing departments teaching them. Departments offering these courses during the 2025-2026 school year include:

- Anthropology	- History	- Rhetoric
- Biology	- Music	- Theatre
- Business	- Politics	- Women and Gender
- Environmental Arts and Humanities	- Psychology	Studies
3. Utilizing the Office of Civic Engagement’s Student Learning Outcomes Rubric to assess students’ (1) civic commitment, (2) integrated learning, and (3) communication & dialogic skills.
4. Include useful democratic engagement resources into the Career Readiness Brightspace page that is automatically added onto every student's portal. Resources would include: state-by-state voting guides, how to absentee presentation, and absentee voting plan sheets.

Strategy

Sewanee: The University of the South will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan civic engagement, student voter participation, and engagement in our democracy.

Strategic Area 1 connected to Goal 1: In order to increase voter participation in both federal and municipal elections by increasing student voter registration and voting rates in the 2024 through 2028 election cycle, we plan to:

1. Make registering to vote easy, accessible, and immediately available
 - a. Work with student-led organizations across Sewanee's campus to develop voter registration tabling that attempts to reach new populations (athletes, greek organization members, the student government association, campus clubs and societies, etc.).
 - i. Promote our [state-specific voting guides](#).
 - ii. Utilize our Instagram ([@sewaneevotes](#)) to share voting resources and information.
 - iii. Table regularly to provide general voting information and aid (e.g., voter registration).
2. Increase Access to Voting via Absentee Ballot: Sewanee's NSLVE data indicates that a large number of students vote absentee. As students come from further away geographically and have limited exposure to the surrounding community that makes up the majority of our campus's electoral district, absentee voting is appealing to many of our students. This insight shapes much of the strategy that follows:
 - a. Create and advertise materials like the following in order to educate students on absentee voting.
 - i. [Sewanee Guide to Voting](#)- serves as a resource hub to help students (and other campus community members) navigate voting, especially if they're off-campus, out-of-state, or studying abroad.
 - ii. [How to Vote Absentee](#)- a PowerPoint with general information about absentee voting.
 - b. Create a media schedule (emails, posters, social) surrounding dates for sending out emails about registration information about absentee voting.
 - c. Publicize dates of primary elections in each state, as well as registration, ballot request, and submission deadlines.
 - d. Publicize what resources The Office of Civic Engagement can offer (e.g. mailing help including free stamps).

- e. Coordinate with The Office of Global Citizenship to ensure that students studying abroad have access to information about how to cast their vote, utilizing absentee voting guides specific for voting while abroad.

Strategic Area 2 connected to Goal 2: In order to foster strategic partnerships with diverse student organizations that connect student leadership to civic action and strengthens a culture of democratic engagement across campus for all, we plan to:

1. Collaborate with specific organizations to promote events that help students realize the significant relationship between their vote and the issues they care about.
2. Continue to collaborate with and encourage interaction between campus political organizations like Sewanee Democrats' Society, Sewanee College Republicans, and Sewanee Young Democratic Socialists.
3. Help students make connections between their engagement on campus and the national political landscape by working with new and existing student organizations to foster non-partisan awareness of policy issues.
4. Build a network of students, faculty, staff, and community members committed to Democratic Engagement.
5. Support student driven events and programming ideas: Leverage office resources to meet student demand for events and training related to democratic engagement.
6. Increase campus presence of Yea, SewaneeVotes!: Increase visibility of programs and normalize democratic participation by rebranding YSV! and creating new logos and swag that students are excited to show off.
7. Partner with the university's Dialogue Across Difference program to foster bi-partisan communication regarding topics like voter suppression and personal feelings towards voting.
8. Provide training on how to be civically engaged beyond voting. Voting is only the first step towards protecting public values
9. Run regular, excellent events that promote democratic engagement and civics education
10. Foster community outreach and engagement: Work with pre-existing community connections established by Sewanee's Office of Civic Engagement (e.g. Richard Hardy Memorial School, Franklin County Election Commission) to extend our efforts to the surrounding area.

Strategic Area 3 connected to Goal 3: Build capacity for bridging political differences by fostering more inclusive conversations around the election across campus through dialogue, deliberation, and voter education for the next two election cycles.

1. Work with Dialogue Across Difference Programs to create opportunities for students to thoughtfully engage with one another on contentious issues.

2. Offer ongoing voter education initiatives.
3. Develop an Election Commitment, a social media campaign and statement reiterating that no matter the election outcome, one will engage in the fair and just treatment of all.
4. Reframing DebateWatches as a way to hold nonpartisan space for our campus community to view and engage with political debates. Continue hosting DebateWatch events in collaboration with Sewanee's Center for Speaking and Listening. Develop a Virtual Debate Watch plan if needed.
5. Dessert and Democracy events

Strategic Area 4 connected to Goal 4: Exploring how to increase democratic engagement within the curriculum

1. Initiate conversation with academic departments and faculty on ways in which they can incorporate democratic engagement in their curricula to strengthen voter education/civics education
2. Collaborate with courses currently designated as Community-Engaged Learning courses (CEL) to consider integrating
3. Utilizing the Office of Civic Engagement's Student Learning Outcomes Rubric to assess students' (1) civic commitment, (2) integrated learning, and (3) communication & dialogic skills.

Strategic Partnerships:

Without the support of others this work would be impracticable. The Office of Civic Engagement and its Democratic Engagement Initiative have partnered with the following internal campus-specific groups and external organizations:

Faculty/Staff Advisory Group:

Dr. Sean O'Rourke, Director of the Center for Speaking and Listening

Dr. Melody Lehn, Co-Director of the Center for Speaking & Listening

Student Organizations:

- Bonner Leader Internship Program
- Canale Leader Internship Program
- Sewanee Order of the Gown
- Sewanee NAACP
- Bairnwick Women's Center
- Sewanee Debate Union
- Sewanee Young Democratic Socialists
- Sewanee Democrats Society
- Sewanee College Republicans

National Partnerships:

- ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge (external, national)
- TurboVote, presented by Democracy Works (external, national)
- Students Learn, Students Vote (external, national)
- Voter Friendly Campus (external, national)
- Tennessee Campus Democracy Network (external, statewide)
- CivicTN (external, statewide)
- The Fourth Founding Project at Stanford University (external, small cohort of 11 universities)
- Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP)
- Bonner Network (internal, campus)
- Canale Service and Leadership Interns (internal, campus)

In 2026, we plan to celebrate:

- United States Semiquincentennial (July 4th, 2026)
- National Voter Registration Day (September 15, 2026)
- Constitution Day (September 17, 2026)
- National Voter Education Week (October 7, 2026 - October 11, 2026)
- Vote Early Day (October 27, 2026)
- Midterm Election Day (November 3, 2026)

Both the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the School of Theology, will be on summer break during the Semiquincentennial on July 4, 2026. However, Sewanee still plans to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Independence Day Commemoration Events include:

- Flag-raising ceremony with brass ensemble
- Arts & crafts fair
- All-American food vendors and festivities
- “Almost World-Famous” Mutt Show
- Children’s games
- Cake-decorating contest viewing and tasting
- Tower bells and carillon concert
- Independence Day parade
- Patriotic celebration concert
- Fireworks show

Reporting

Sewanee’s Office of Civic Engagement, together with the SewaneeVotes! team and campus democratic engagement partners, will develop clear processes for sharing information about our action plan, progress toward goals, and key voting data with the broader campus community. Our aim is to ensure that students, faculty, staff, and community partners have consistent access to

transparent updates, data-driven insights, and opportunities to support our democratic engagement work.

Internally, the action plan will be shared with and regularly reviewed by members of SewaneeVotes!, including student leaders; staff within the Office of Civic Engagement; faculty partners; the Student Government Association; and other campus collaborators. Regular review of the plan during team meetings will help guide programming, track progress toward goals, and ensure alignment with the academic calendar and student needs.

Once our 2024 NSLVE report is received, we plan to host a campus-wide event to review and interpret the findings. This session will walk students through key data points, identify trends in campus voting behavior, and spark broader interest in civic participation. The event will also help draw attention to Sewanee's publicly accessible voting and elections [webpage](#), an underutilized resource we aim to promote more intentionally.

Externally, the action plan will be shared with the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and the Voter Friendly Campus initiative. Sewanee representatives who participate in regional and national civic engagement networks will offer to share the plan and relevant data as appropriate.

Data supporting both short-term and long-term goals will be primarily drawn from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) and campus data available through Sewanee's Office of Institutional Research. Once received, NSLVE reports will be shared broadly with the campus community.

Through intentional transparency, regular data review, and campus-wide engagement around our findings, SewaneeVotes! seeks to build a more informed, active, and civically engaged university community.

Evaluation

Sewanee will evaluate the effectiveness of its democratic engagement action plan through a combination of quantitative data, qualitative feedback, and institutional insights. Evaluation will allow our team to assess progress toward goals, identify effective strategies, and adjust approaches as needed to maximize impact.

At the end of each semester, data collected throughout the semester will be analyzed to track metrics such as:

- Number of student encounters at voter registration events
- Number of eligible student voters registered through TurboVote
- Number of eligible student voters registered by paper
- Percentage of registered voters who voted in midterm and presidential elections
- Attendance at voter education events
- Qualitative feedback from surveys distributed at educational events

These evaluation efforts are led internally by Joseph Davis and the Bonner/Canale Intern for Democratic Engagement (currently Olivia Moellering Baratas C'27), ensuring continuity and close collaboration with student leaders, faculty, and staff partners.

In addition, Sewanee will leverage the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) to assess campus-wide voter registration and turnout patterns, including breakdowns by demographics, class year, and voting methods. NSLVE data will be used alongside internal records to identify trends, evaluate participation rates, and measure progress toward both short-term and long-term goals. Key performance indicators will include voter registration and turnout rates, participation in educational events, and institutional support for civic engagement.

Sewanee's evaluation framework also considers broader institutional context and practices:

- Alignment with institutional goals for student leadership development and civic engagement
- Integration of voter registration into campus systems and events to reach students efficiently
- Attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion, including programming for off-campus, non-traditional, and underrepresented students

Findings from these evaluations will be shared with the campus community via reports, infographics, presentations, and campus-wide events. Insights will inform ongoing planning, guide improvements to programming, and ensure that SewaneeVotes! strategies are responsive to student needs and institutional goals.

Through this multifaceted evaluation approach, Sewanee seeks to strengthen voter engagement, institutionalize support for democratic participation, and cultivate a culture of informed civic responsibility across the campus.