

## FINAL

### Swarthmore College Get Out the Vote Committee 2026-2027 Action Plan

June 22, 2026

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan is the work of the Get Out the Vote (GOTV) committee of Swarthmore College, which includes representatives from the staff, faculty, and student body. We are a nonpartisan group charged with educating students (particularly first-time voters and traditionally underrepresented voters) on their voting rights and positioning them to participate in our democratic process. We do this, in part, by focusing on voter registration and voter turnout at all primary and general elections. Our aim is to increase participation in the voting process regardless of political party affiliation. Swarthmore has been designated as a “Voter Friendly Campus” by the Campus Vote Project since 2019 and takes our charge to empower student voters seriously.

The GOTV committee was called to action by Swarthmore College President Valerie Smith in February 2018. President Smith believes in government by all the people. She appreciates the power of the vote as an expression of one’s individual voice within the democratic process. President Smith convened GOTV, in part, in response to a report from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) which showed that Swarthmore’s overall voting rate had fallen below the national average in the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections. Since the committee’s conception, the College has seen voter turnout rates trend upward. This plan intends to build a thoughtful and strategic roadmap for our 2026-27 work by being mindful of our students’ needs and building on our previous successes.

Student activism is ever-present on our campus and on campuses across the country. In addition to explaining the mechanics of voting, GOTV strategizes on how to inspire students to lean into their potential power as voters (i.e., according to Rock the Vote, Millennials and Gen Z comprise 44% of potential American voters). We recognize that some students distrust the electoral system, are disillusioned with politics, and/or are uncertain that their vote will make a difference. A quote from a November 2025 Swarthmore post-election student survey illustrates this point. ***“Why cast a ballot out of millions?”*** In this moment, many people inside and outside of the academy find the world to be a chaotic and sometimes unwelcoming place. GOTV’s challenge is to consistently deliver election-related programming that educates, informs, builds bridges, nurtures hope, and includes elements of fun. If we want to cultivate lifelong voters, the experience needs to be meaningful for them on some level. Perhaps by emphasizing that the act of voting — regardless of outcome — allows us to be part of something bigger than our individual choices.

GOTV strives to be thoughtful about the range of sentiments students may feel when it comes to voting and are committed to providing opportunities for students to reflect on how attitudes toward the upcoming midterm election (specifically) and voting (more generally) may be impacted by current events — be they local or global. The committee hopes to work with others on campus, including members from the Division of Student Affairs (DOSA), the Office of

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and individual faculty members, to create spaces on campus where students can express feelings of discomfort or ambivalence about voting, elections, etc.

The GOTV committee will oversee planning, implementation, and evaluation of our goals in collaboration with our on-campus and off-campus partners. We'll also regularly solicit feedback from students, allowing us to adapt our strategies and tactics as circumstances warrant. As part of this work, the group is committed to staying informed of changes in the voting landscape (e.g., USPS postmarking changes, pending legislation on the state or federal level) that may impact the student experience. Because the committee's work will evolve as needed, our plan will as well. It will be a "living document," updated regularly throughout the 2026-27 academic year to reflect new opportunities, changes, and outcomes.

—Pam Shropshire, committee chair, June 2026

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## **II. LEADERSHIP**

### **The Get Out the Vote (GOTV) Committee**

GOTV is led by Pamela Shropshire, Special Assistant for Presidential Initiatives, who is a direct report to President Smith. Staff and faculty have been invited to join this energetic and hands-on committee based on their known interest in the cause, because they bring helpful insight to the work generally, and/or because of their particular knowledge of Swarthmore's campus and culture.

Connections to students who are passionate about our democracy are integral to our success. GOTV student members typically come from SwatVotes (a Swarthmore student voting group), are Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows, and/or are Inclusive Excellence Fellows from Swarthmore's Office of Inclusive Excellence and Community Development. Note: While student leadership in this area changes regularly as students graduate, staff leadership of GOTV is included in the portfolio of the Special Assistant for President Initiatives, so succession is identified and planned for in that way.

(A list of all members follows next.)

#### **2025-26 GOTV Committee**

The GOTV committee coordinates efforts across campus to increase Swarthmore student voter participation. The committee meets in person eight times a year with additional planning and conversation in between meetings.

| <b>First</b> | <b>Last</b> | <b>Department</b>                                                              | <b>Title</b>                                                           | <b>Affiliation</b> |
|--------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Ben          | Berger      | Political Science Department and Lang Center for Civic & Social Responsibility | Professor of Political Science & Executive Director of the Lang Center | Faculty            |

|         |                 |                                    |                                                |                      |
|---------|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Wyatt   | Brannon         | Class of 2026                      |                                                | Student              |
| Jasmine | Flowers         | Class of 2028                      |                                                | Student              |
| Joe     | Fox             | Class of 2027                      |                                                | Student              |
| Roy     | Greim           | Communications Office              | Associate Director, Web Communications         | Staff                |
| Abby    | Guise           | Class of 2026                      |                                                | Student              |
| Sydney  | Hankin          | Class of 2027                      |                                                | Student              |
| Clare   | Hyre            | Office of Sustainability           | Associate Director of Sustainability           | Staff                |
| Yulia   | Korovikov       | Admissions                         | Associate Dean, Admissions                     | Staff                |
| Daniel  | Laurison        | Sociology Department               | Associate Professor                            | Faculty              |
| Jeremy  | Loomis          | Athletics Division                 | Head Women's Tennis Coach                      | Coach/<br>Instructor |
| Pamela  | Shropshire      | Office of the President            | Special Assistant for Presidential Initiatives | Staff                |
| Gigi    | Simeone         | Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) | Health Sciences/Pre Law Advisor                | Staff                |
| Kristen | Smith           | Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) | Registrar                                      | Staff                |
| Kelly   | Speer           | Advancement                        | Associate Director of Marketing                | Staff                |
| Abbie   | Weil            | College Libraries                  | Research & Instruction Outreach Librarian      | Staff                |
| Rebecca | Weintraub-Barth | Division of Student Affairs (DOSA) | Director, Student Activities                   | Staff                |

Note: The 2026-27 committee will be announced in September

## **Campus Partners**

### ***Student Groups:***

- Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows
- SwatVotes

### ***Faculty/Staff:***

- Admissions
- Advancement
- Athletics Division
- Communications
- Division of Student Affairs (DOSA)
- Department of Political Science
- Global Engagement Office
- Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility
- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Office of Inclusive Excellence and Community Development
- Office of the President
- Office of the Provost
- OneCard Office
- Registrar's Office
- Swarthmore College Libraries
- Swarthmore Dining

### ***Off-Campus Partners***

- All-In Campus Democracy Challenge
- Borough of Swarthmore
- Campus Vote Project
- Delaware County Office of Election Operations
- Institute for Citizens and Scholars
- Pennsylvania Student Voter Coalition
- Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development
- TurboVote
- Voter Friendly Campus

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## **III. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS**

As was noted in the Executive Summary, the GOTV committee began as a result of President Smith's sponsorship and deep commitment to civic engagement. President Smith is a signatory of the All In President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation and was a member of the inaugural leadership group of All In Democracy's Presidents' Council. Her personal voting story can be found in a video posted on the GOTV website.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hbAOn8vVaQ&t=8s>

Swarthmore College has a long-standing commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement and provides opportunities for all community members — especially our students — to learn, practice, and model how to live and work with others who are different from each

other. Social justice, solving global problems, and supporting local communities are integral to the Swarthmore experience. Evidence of this can be found across campus in formal and informal settings, and in the fulfillment of our mission statement which reads, in part, that students are encouraged to “*flourish and contribute to a better world.*” Specific examples of this follow.

### **Strategic Plan**

As Swarthmore College plans for the next chapter of our history, the institution has brought members of our community together to implement the work of a new **strategic plan** — the first such initiative in more than a decade. The College is committed to respecting diverse identities and experiences, including those shaped by race, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, and national origin, among others; helping community members understand changing political, economic, and social dynamics; and fostering an ethos of collaborative self-examination.

A central goal of the strategic plan is to “*create a community prepared for life in a multiracial, multicultural democracy and the world.*” This goal specifically explores how to equip students, faculty, staff, and alumni to lead and thrive in light of current and anticipated trends, and growing threats to democratic institutions, in the U.S. and across the globe. The plan more generally will explore how disruptions in higher education, including changing demographics, growing inequality, heightened polarization, and emerging lessons from the pandemic, shape our understanding of Swarthmore’s contributions to the common good. The plan explores different ideas of leadership, the qualities essential during a period of great disruption and deep divisions, and ways we can remain open to and in conversation with diverse viewpoints within our communities.

### **Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

One of the outcomes of the strategic plan is the establishment of Swarthmore’s **Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**. Under the auspices of a new Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, this office is charged with fostering competencies necessary for productive, respectful communication across diverse viewpoints and experiences. Community building is advanced through several initiatives including the hosting of community conversations, a lunch and learn series, and through a partnership with the Constructive Dialogue Institute. As was mentioned in the executive summary, GOTV anticipates working in partnership with this Office to provide a space for students to have exploratory conversations about voting and politics in a non-judgmental, non-persuasive environment.

### **Committee on Social Responsibility**

The **Committee on Social Responsibility** is the College’s only board committee composed of board members, students, faculty, and staff. It is charged with reflecting upon the College’s commitment, in association with the fulfillment of its institutional mission, to prepare and motivate students to engage issues of social responsibility facing our communities and societies and to set their own paths as responsible citizens toward sharing a more inclusive, just, and compassionate world. Through its ongoing programming — for example a previous panel entitled “Youth in the System: Why Juvenile Justice Needs Reform” — the committee convenes

important cross constituent conversations and engages our students on what it means to live and thrive in a multiracial democracy.

### **Eugene M. Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility**

The **Lang Center** prepares students to understand and engage issues of civic and social concern and, as active citizens of our democracy, to set their paths toward shaping a more just and compassionate world. Operating within the Provost's Office, the Lang Center facilitates Swarthmore College's commitment to intellectual rigor, ethical engagement, and social responsibility by connecting curriculum (formal coursework and related research), campus, and communities. These communities include the proximate communities of Chester, Pennsylvania, and the greater Philadelphia area; more distant community partners around the country and globe; and the community of scholars and practitioners, including Swarthmore College faculty, who share knowledge and best practices regarding ethical action and civic engagement. The Lang Center connects the College's curricular excellence with engagement in all of those communities using an approach that builds upon Ernest Boyer's concept of "Engaged Scholarship." Through programs such as **Debating for Democracy**, the Lang Center connects communities with students trained for social change and civic advocacy. The GOTV committee enjoys a robust partnership with the Lang Center; they are integral to our work.

### **Federal Mandate**

Swarthmore is committed to fulfilling its federally mandated commitment to provide access to voting resources for all students. The 1998 Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 included a mandate that required institutions of higher education to engage in certain voter registration activities during years when there are elections for federal office, governor or other chief executives within the state [HEA Section 487(a)(23)]. More recent legislation, enacted by Congress as part of the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act, revised the law to allow institutions to comply with the mandate through electronic distribution. The Registrar's Office took responsibility for ensuring that Swarthmore was in compliance with the law from 1998 to 2017. From 2018 to the present, the President's Office and the Swarthmore Get Out the Vote committee have ensured compliance and sought to creatively support students in ways that exceed these expectations.

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## **IV. LANDSCAPE AND BACKGROUND**

### **Student Demographics**

Swarthmore College is a private, co-educational, liberal arts college located 11 miles southwest of Philadelphia. Currently just over 1,700 students are enrolled at Swarthmore; 94% live on campus. The student body is racially diverse and comes to Swarthmore from across the country (38% come from outside the Mid-Atlantic region) and around the world (14% of students are international).

## History of Civic Participation

Swarthmore College has a tradition of supporting civic participation. Over the years, several offices and student groups made efforts to encourage registration and voting by sharing voter registration forms, hosting debate watch parties, and transporting students to the polls via private cars. These efforts had been informally organized and did not have a central guiding plan until 2018 when President Valerie Smith convened the Get Out the Vote committee.

## Local Voting

There are two polling places that serve the Swarthmore campus. The specific polling location for students who wish to vote in the Borough of Swarthmore is based on the residence hall in which they live — not the general mailing address for the College. Over the years, Swarthmore students have shared their confusion about registering while living on campus. Some neglect to include their residence hall when submitting a voter registration form which renders their application invalid. Some neglect to update their voter registration when changing dorms which can result in them visiting a polling place on election day to which they aren't registered. Here's a student quote from a Swarthmore post-election survey that expresses that frustration. ***"Why are we all assigned locations? That's so stupid. We should all be allowed to vote at any place."*** Matters are further complicated when outside groups (without the proper knowledge) try to help Swarthmore students register and inadvertently on occasion disenfranchise them.

The College has reached out to Delaware County (DELCO) officials over the years looking for various remedies to this issue (e.g., proposing the creation of a single voting precinct for all Swarthmore students, the hosting of a pop up voter visitor center on campus, etc.) with limited success. The DELCO Office of Election Operations has shared with GOTV that ***creating one precinct for all of Swarthmore College's students would result in a precinct with a number of voters that would far exceed state guidelines.***

Despite our inability to impact the particular configuration of Swarthmore voting precincts, GOTV has been steadily building our relationship with regional officials and will continue to do so. For example, we anticipate that as before, the DELCO election's office will reach out to the College and offer students paid poll workers positions. GOTV, in turn, will again invite the election's office to our campus for a special voting machine demo presentation in the fall. ***(See Strategy #1 Educate & Empower.)***

## Research + Barriers to Voting

While the GOTV committee is encouraged by the robust turnout rate of students (see snapshot with data provided by NSLVE next) — particularly since the launch of GOTV — students continue to face barriers (actual and perceived) to voting.

| Year | Swarthmore Registration Rate | Swarthmore Voting Rate of Registered Students | Swarthmore Voting Rate of All Eligible Students | Voting Rate for All NSLVE Institutions |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 2012 | 80%                          | 75.9%                                         | 60.7%                                           | 47%                                    |

|      |       |       |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|      |       |       |       |       |
| 2014 | 68.7% | 30.7% | 21.1% | 19.1% |
| 2016 | 85.7% | 80.6% | 69.1% | 53%   |
| 2018 | 85.7% | 66%   | 56.6% | 39%   |
| 2020 | 88.8% | 85.4% | 75.9% | 66%   |
| 2022 | 82.7% | 56.7% | 46.9% | 30.6% |

### ***Perceived Barriers***

Understanding why eligible students don't register to vote or why registered students don't turn out to vote is of interest to GOTV. The committee continually seeks out student feedback about perceived barriers to the voting process so that we can provide students with tools, as we are able, to navigate through challenges.

The primary perceived barriers outlined by eligible Swarthmore students are as follows. Note: this list of barriers has remained pretty consistent since 2018:

- Confusion about the registration process
- Confusion on how absentee/mail-in ballots work (both within and outside of Pennsylvania)
- Discomfort and confusion on traveling to local polling stations
- Feeling too busy or overwhelmed by schoolwork
- Feeling that their votes will not make a significant difference
- “Goldilocks Complex” (i.e., dissatisfaction if their ideal candidate isn't on the ballot)

An addition to the above list — while it's highly probable that the process of deciding WHO to vote for has complicated students' participation in the electoral process over the years, students have been more vocal recently (through anecdotal conversations and surveys) about this particular speed bump. Swarthmore students are known for their intellect but selecting a candidate from a slate of options is a skill set that some students are not familiar with. More and more, students articulate being stymied by the rigorous process involved in researching and vetting candidates. Here are two student comments which illustrate this ***“I couldn't find any good resources for who was on the ballot and what they stand for.”*** and ***“I had a lot of trouble trying to find ballot information on the election, so it would be nice to have a place with all the people on the ballot and a short blurb about them.”***

Furthermore, Swarthmore and several other Pennsylvania colleges have found Pennsylvania's online voter registration system to be problematic. Despite modest improvements, the uploading of signatures continues to be glitchy and troublesome. Online applications are the preferred option for our students (and for election offices). Students are not experienced at completing paper applications which is our default option at this time during registration drives.

### ***“Unforced” Voting Errors***

In addition to the barriers listed above, the committee has observed the following (preventable) patterns of behavior which negatively impact voter turnout:

- Omission of dorm names on Pennsylvania voter registration applications resulting in invalid applications.
  - Reminder: Swarthmore's campus is served by two different precincts (a source of consternation and confusion for our students) which are determined by the particular dorm a student resides in.
- Not confirming voter registration status and having to vote provisionally.
  - Example: An election official at one of the precincts that serves our campus shared ***"We've had a number of students who were sent a letter from the county telling them there was a problem with their registration — but they didn't respond."***
- Missing deadlines to both request and return mail-in ballots particularly when voting outside of Pennsylvania.
  - One student shared ***"Planned to vote but found out to late my registration never went through and missed deadline for absentee ballot"***
  - Note: Swarthmore's surveys indicate an important shift in voting behavior since the onset of the pandemic with more and more students choosing to vote outside of Pennsylvania. Note: approximately 28% of respondents in a 2025 Swarthmore survey indicated they were registered to vote outside of Pennsylvania. This differs from our pre-pandemic experience where an overwhelming majority of our students were registered to vote in Pennsylvania and did so in person.

### ***Attitudes About Voting***

As was referenced in our Executive Summary, conflicted feelings and attitudes about voting among students has implications for the work of the GOTV committee.

Sentiments pulled from Swarthmore student surveys include:

- ***"GOTV should understand that there are ways to engage with politics that are not voting. I think a lot about politics... idc about voting."***
- ***"Honestly idc about voting that much so I just tune it all out"***
- ***"No candidates worth voting for"***
- ***"I don't believe in voting in candidates that don't inspire me. I'd rather vote for someone I believe in than to further a party's agenda, especially one that I don't believe in to accomplish anything. I refuse to vote for someone who's the least worst, and would like to vote for the best."***

A key takeaway from a recent campus-wide culture and climate survey to learn about student, staff, and faculty experiences with respect to campus diversity further demonstrated conflicted feelings and attitudes about voting. Survey participants indicated that interactions across political differences occur infrequently at Swarthmore; some respondents reported feeling uncomfortable when those interactions occur. Interacting across political differences is an area the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has committed to improving. GOTV intends to be a part of these efforts.

## **Financial and Other Support**

Though the GOTV committee doesn't have a dedicated budget from the College, President Smith is a strong supporter of GOTV efforts and has offered discretionary funds for specific activities, as needed — as has the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility. The Lang Center's support is particularly significant as it is the College's largest and most active center for civic engagement. The Center oversees a robust and growing slate of engaged scholarship coursework.

The GOTV committee continually seeks out partnerships and non-financial support that amplifies our efforts and elevates Swarthmore's reputation as a democratically engaged campus. As was mentioned in the Executive Summary, Swarthmore College has been designated a "Voter Friendly Campus" by the Campus Vote Project since 2019.

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## **V. + VI. GOALS, STRATEGIES & TACTICS**

Colleges and universities across the country and around the world have seen a rise in student activism. The members of GOTV strive to help our students connect social justice aspirations they may have with voting and equip them with the practical knowledge they need to engage in the electoral process. GOTV recognizes there are many different ways to be civically engaged and also believes that informed and consistent voting can often be a direct and immediate way to achieve particular outcomes. Embedded in our messaging is the notion that elections have consequences and their impact sometimes falls most harshly on those who have long been targeted by systemic inequality. As we continually reflect on our work, particularly during these uncertain times, GOTV considers how best to engage with students in ways that authentically reflect their beliefs and experiences yet still affirm student voters' capacity to have an impact.

### **2026-27 Goals**

#### ***Primary Goal***

GOTV's ultimate goal is a civically engaged student body with a 100% registration rate and 100% voter turnout for all eligible students. In the past, we've matched our progress towards this using data from NSLVE — striving each year to match or exceed our previous voting rates. Our voting rates for the 2022 midterms are as follows. Note: rates for 2024 elections are not forthcoming.

- **82.7%** registration rate for eligible students
- **56.7%** voting rate of registered students
- **46.9%** voting rate of eligible students
- **30.6%** voting rate for all NSLVE institutions

As receiving NSLVE data for the 2026 midterms is not currently an option, the committee will explore how we might secure comparable data on those students voting in Swarthmore from other sources (e.g., public voting records).

### **Secondary Goal**

For a secondary goal, GOTV will amplify our support for those students who choose to vote outside of Pennsylvania. (**See Strategy #2: Help Students Navigate Barriers To Voting.**)

This goal was created in response to the changing voting behavior of our students — post COVID. Prior to COVID, the majority of Swarthmore students registered using a campus address and cast their ballots in person. Through anecdotal conversations and Swarthmore surveys, GOTV has noted a small yet significant shift — more and more students are expressing an interest in voting outside of Pennsylvania — and are uncertain how to act on that interest.

While the committee doesn't have the wherewithal to obtain data on students who vote outside of Pennsylvania, we can examine our engagement with students around this by:

- Logging the number and nature of inquiries we receive from students interested in voting out of state
- Creating and tracking the number and type of materials we produce to support this interest (e.g., flyer on how students can find voting resources for the 10 top home states students come from)
- Hosting and tracking the number and type of events we host to support this interest (e.g., voter registration party for New Yorkers)
- Adding questions to the Swarthmore post-election student survey that explores their knowledge of voting outside Pennsylvania (e.g., "Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that GOTV has offered resources that gave you an understanding of how to vote out of state.")

We will use the baseline data collected during the 2026-27 election cycle to guide and inform our work going forward.

Additionally, TurboVote whose contract we have extended (primarily to serve out of state voters) may be a useful source of information.

## **2026-27 Strategies & Tactics**

### ***Lessons Learned From Previous Election Cycles***

The following feedback from Swarthmore students (which has been fairly consistent over the years) informs our work, as is feasible. Students have asked that GOTV:

- Distribute information to them earlier in the process
- Simplify our messaging — making it less text heavy, more visual, and more focused on individual calls to action
- Highlight information on voting by mail and mail-in ballots (both within and outside of Pennsylvania)
- Incorporate more video tutorials into our messaging
- Have a larger presence on social media
- Direct students towards information on the various candidates' positions — particularly as this relates to local and regional elections

### ***Overarching Approach***

As we have done previously, the GOTV committee will focus on rolling out a simple and consistent call to action for students. The messaging will be crafted to breakdown the voting

process for students making it easier for them to navigate what can feel like an overwhelming undertaking. Students will be encouraged to create a customized step by step plan which highlights key decision making junctures and asks them to consider the following:

- #1 Am I eligible to vote?
- #2 Where should I register — at Swarthmore or my permanent address?
- #3 What are the key voting deadlines for my voting region?
- #4 Who/what's on the ballot?
- #5 How do I select a candidate from a slate of options?
- #6 How will I cast my ballot — in person or by mail?
  - Is voting by mail an option in my region? If yes, how does that work?
  - If I vote in person, where's my polling place? When will I go and how will I get there? What do I need to bring?
- #7 Who should I contact if I have questions or run into problems?

### ***Strategy #1: Educate + Empower***

**Educate:** Voting and elections are an essential part of democracy. In order to fully participate in our democracy, students (many of whom are first time voters) need to understand the fundamentals (e.g., who's eligible to vote, what happens in a polling place, how to vet a candidate, etc.). One of GOTV's primary strategies is to demystify the mechanics of voting for students through education.

**Empower:** In addition to a focus on the mechanics of voting, GOTV will affirm in our messaging potential connections between activism, civic engagement, and voting (i.e. voting can be an expression of a commitment to social justice). We aspire to talk to students about the power they can have as voters. (Note: As was mentioned in the executive summary, The Voter Participation Center reports that The New American Majority — young people, people of color, and unmarried women — is 150 million people strong. They represent 64% of the people who can vote in America.)

### **GOTV will...**

- **Compile voting information and resources in a comprehensive website.** The GOTV website ([www.swarthmore.edu/voter-information](http://www.swarthmore.edu/voter-information)) serves as the primary source of voting information for Swarthmore students and is the cornerstone of our voter education efforts. It features a wide-ranging list of information on registering, interpreting a ballot, casting a vote, and other information geared specifically for college students. A dedicated email address ([vote@swarthmore.edu](mailto:vote@swarthmore.edu)) serves as a companion piece to the website and a "hotline" for student voting questions and concerns.
- **Offer a Moodle (Swarthmore's online course management tool) unit on voting as part of orientation.** This will be the fourth year that GOTV will roll out this special unit, developed in partnership with the College's Division of Student Affairs (DOSA), for first year students

and transfer students. The course features a short video message from President Smith on the importance of voting, a quiz which encourages students to explore their evolving political identity, and live links to items like “Registering in Pennsylvania.”

- **Register students during fall move-in day.** As is tradition, GOTV will register students new to the area, update the registration of those who want to make a change, and/or confirm the registration status of students who believe they are already registered. Historically, this has been a high traffic/high energy event for GOTV and a great opportunity to talk with parents about the voting resources available to their students.
- **Provide ongoing voter information and registration assistance to students.** Outreach doesn’t end after move-in day. Tabling is GOTV’s primary way of having face to face interactions with students — which we know they value. Each semester, GOTV creates and publicizes a voter registration tabling schedule so students are aware of when they can ask questions and receive voting materials. The College’s monthly Garnet Days, when the entire community is invited to get together to socialize, have been the anchor for our tabling.
  - We will once again, in coordination with the DELCO Elections Office, offer students (partially) pre-filled paper voter registration applications — minimizing some of the common application errors made by students (e.g., neglecting to include the correct zip code on the application).
- **Spread the word through e-mails, flyers and other materials branded to reinforce GOTV as a resource for students.** Each election cycle brings a tsunami of information which can easily overwhelm students — particularly first time voters. GOTV will carefully map out an email campaign (using attention grabbing images) that breaks down information into digestible chunks for students — sharing information in a timeline aligned with election deadlines. Note: Students studying abroad will receive messaging that addresses their particular status.
  - Email messages will be supplemented by flyering in high-traffic areas and the posting of digital messages in the student union.
  - For the third year in a row, the committee will produce voting bookmarks featuring the pets of faculty and staff. These voting “crib sheets” have been great conversation starters and are designed to help students stay on top of key voting deadlines.
  - GOTV will pull graphics from the voter bookmarks to create eye-catching voter registration kits that will be placed at strategic areas across campus like the library and fitness center. The kits will include blank voter registration forms as well as contact information for those with follow-up questions.
- **Partner with student leaders to disseminate information.** GOTV will continue to prioritize our work with SwatVotes, a nonpartisan student group formed specifically to address student voting. The committee will also seek out partnerships with other student leadership groups such as SGO (Student Government Organization).
- **Meet with student affinity groups.** GOTV will continue to actively reach out to small groups of students — particularly those that include traditionally under-represented voters — to talk about their voting experiences and highlight their options as voters. This will include students from the Black Cultural, Gender & Sexuality, and Intercultural Centers; as well as student-athletes, Mellon Mays Fellows, Green Advisors from our Sustainability Office, Student Academic Mentors, and students from the First Gen/Low Income group.

- **Offer comprehensive voter registration information to key influencers.** GOTV will reach out to, engage and educate resident assistants, academic administrative assistants, coaches/trainers and other community members trusted by students on the voting options available to students and the voter registration process.
- **Collaborate with staff.** GOTV will share customized information on Swarthmore's voting landscape and some of the barriers student voters face with groups like the Division of Student Affairs (DOSA), Administrative Advisory Council, and the President's Staff Advisory Council and ask for their guidance and support. DOSA in particular has been an active partner of GOTV's and we anticipate they will again take the lead on offering students pre and post-election support.
- **Coordinate with faculty.** Because faculty at Swarthmore govern the curriculum and have divergent views on civic education, it has not been Swarthmore's practice to actively embed voter education into the College's curriculum. But, while there is a clear demarcation between curricular and co-curricular activities at Swarthmore, GOTV anticipates that as has happened previously, individual faculty members will be interested in cross promoting GOTV events with faculty panels and programming. GOTV will also brainstorm on other creative approaches to engaging faculty (e.g., presenting at faculty lunches).
- **Submit for consideration stories and resources on voting to College publications.** This includes connecting with outlets like *Minding the Light*, the College's e-newsletter that serves the entire campus community including alumni, and *The Phoenix*, the campus's student-run paper.
- **Invite the Delaware County (DELCO) Election's Office to campus.** Our hope is that DELCO officials will be available to once again come to campus and offer students a hands-on demonstration of how voting machines work. Some students have shared being apprehensive about voting in person. The Election Office's previous visit to campus helped demystify the actual voting process for first time voters (and others) by allowing Swarthmore community members to submit a mock ballot and ask questions about what they can expect on Election Day if voting in person.

### **Strategy #2: Help Students Navigate Barriers To Voting**

Conventional wisdom among researchers says that voting in one election substantially increases the likelihood of voting in the future. GOTV is interested in making voting a habit — in making new student voters lifetime voters. But in order to help students form this habit, the committee first needs to understand why eligible students don't register to vote or why registered students don't turn out to vote.

GOTV regularly asks students through surveys and small focus groups about the institutional factors and campus climates that can affect their political engagement. This includes factors that frustrate and deter students who genuinely want to participate. To recap from the barriers section, students have expressed a lack of understanding of some voting fundamentals; find it challenging to keep on top of electoral deadlines; struggle to vet candidates; find traveling to the polls to be cumbersome; and sometimes feel their vote doesn't matter. GOTV wants to ensure that our students have a hands-on understanding of how voting works and the ability to navigate around obstacles as needed.

**GOTV will...**

- **Focus on the creation of customized voting plans.** GOTV will continue to encourage students to be intentional when it comes to voting. Students will be prompted to map out individual voting plans that lift up key voting deadlines; outline where and how they will vote (e.g., in person or by mail); and if in person, at what time and how they will get there.
- **Share a fresh new voter registration video.** When surveyed, our students regularly say they want more video tutorials on voting. They've also said that hearing from fellow students (or "word of mouth") is the most helpful way for them to learn about voting practices. With this in mind, two students on the GOTV committee have created a short video — for students, by students — which simply outlines how to register in Pennsylvania. Our hope is this piece will resonate with students and be something they can easily share with each other. The video combined with the (partially) pre-filled voter registration applications we've created are attempts to minimize common application errors made by students (e.g., neglecting to include the proper zip code on the application).
- **Amplify our support for students who want to vote outside of Pennsylvania in two ways.** It's not been uncommon to hear students say, "*The only reason I didn't vote this year was because I forgot to request a mail-in ballot from my home state.*" GOTV is taking a two pronged approach to this challenge:
  - This spring, GOTV found some success highlighting voting information for those top regions aligned with our students' home states (i.e., New York, California, New Jersey, Maryland, Massachusetts, Virginia, Texas, Florida, and Connecticut). Students appeared to appreciate receiving this information, encouraging GOTV to continue to share these resources in the future.
  - GOTV has extended our contract with TurboVote ([swarthmore.turbovote.org](https://swarthmore.turbovote.org)), a non-partisan online organization devoted to improving civic engagement through the use of technology. TurboVote offers voter registration guidance and election information reminders and is free to all of our students, faculty and staff. We hope this tool is particularly helpful for those voting outside of Pennsylvania.
- **Make getting to the polls feel less daunting on election day.** Students have repeatedly shared that walking to the polling sites which serve Swarthmore students (despite their relatively short distances from campus) is an impediment to turnout. Accordingly, GOTV will again secure a shuttle that will loop between campus and our two precincts on election day.
- **Support students in their selection of candidates by sharing materials and holding sessions that break down and demystify the research process into steps:**
  - #1 Think about your priorities and how you envision your future
  - #2 See who's on the ballot in your voting precinct
  - #3 Learn about the roles and responsibilities of the candidates
  - #4 Consider a candidate's position on the issues
  - #5 Seek out and explore nonpartisan voting guides
- **Foster a sense of agency among student voters.** In our messaging, GOTV will try to help students see connections between issues they care about (e.g., the environment), the role of elected officials, and the impact they can have as voters (e.g., by highlighting previous regional races where candidates were elected with slim majorities). Additionally, GOTV will educate students on voter suppression efforts and offer them tools they can use to ensure their voices are heard. (Note: As young voters turned out in record numbers in 2018 and 2020, they became in some instances targets of voter suppression efforts e.g., rise of voter

ID laws, intensified efforts to remove polling sites from college campuses – cited in a 2018 comprehensive [survey](#) of voter suppression by the Center for American Progress.)

### ***Strategy #3: Generate Excitement Around Voting (or a spoonful of sugar)***

Not surprisingly, students have shared feeling stressed about the current political climate and uncertainty about how they can engage. The committee appreciates the range of emotions students have been experiencing and want to balance some of the anxiety with a bit of positivity. Having the right to vote can be a cause of celebration. And, if we want new voters to keep voting, they need to find the experience meaningful — after all, individual votes are the basis of our democracy.

#### **GOTV will...**

- **Make election day festive.** Election day is our Super Bowl! In addition to organizing rides to the polls, GOTV will again host a pop-up celebration on election day with food, music, and other amenities for all community members (regardless of their eligibility status) — with the goal of reminding students to take a break from their studies and exercise their right to vote. We will invite College's mascot Phineas to make an appearance giving students opportunities to take selfies with this beloved campus figure.
- **Involve leadership.** GOTV will solicit encouraging messages from the President and the Provost on the importance of registering and voting that can be shared with the community at large.
- **Host special events and other engaging activities throughout the year.** GOTV looks for entertaining ways to engage students on voting and the democratic process. This includes a repeat of a trivia night that brings students, faculty, and staff together for a fun intergenerational evening of questions on presidential pets, the Electoral College, the Supreme Court, and the like. Additionally:
  - The fall will feature the wildly popular Halloween puppy parade where community members vote for the Best DIY Costume, Scariest Costume, Cutest Costume, and Best Overall Costume. Spring brings a voting competition with a sugary twist, where students, staff and faculty vote on cookies made by bakers in our Dining Center with the winner featured in an upcoming menu cycle. (FYI in 2026 Strawberry Pop tart Cookie came out on top.) These mock voting events give students an opportunity to flex their voting muscle.
  - GOTV and the College Libraries share a robust partnership. The Libraries have been the site of several pop up events and will join GOTV and the Computer Science department to co-host a game jam this fall. The jam will be a 24-hour event where students assemble teams to create a video or board game from start to finish. This particular game jam will have an election/civic engagement theme.

### ***Strategy #4: Maintaining & Expanding Partnerships***

#### **GOTV will...**

- **Maintain and foster key campus relationships.** GOTV values our on campus supporters and works hard to preserve those relationships. President Smith's advocacy for GOTV has been mentioned repeatedly in this document. Other key campus leaders — including the Provost, Vice President of Student Affairs, Vice President of Communications, and Vice President of Advancement — have demonstrated their support for the committee by

allocating resources and staff hours. It must be noted that GOTV's ability to move our agenda forward is due in large part to the support received from Swarthmore's senior leadership and to the GOTV committee's ability to draw on and leverage key relationships both internally and externally.

- **Build and cultivate external relationships.** The GOTV committee will continue to engage with groups off campus to coordinate our efforts to provide education and resources to student voters. Of particular value is our participation with the Pennsylvania Student Voter Coalition. We are also deeply committed to maintaining our relationship with regional officials like the Delaware County Board of Elections and Delaware County Election Operations.

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## VII. NSLVE

GOTV has participated in the NSLVE program dating back to 2012. Here's a link to the last report received (2022). [www.swarthmore.edu/sites/default/files/assets/documents/voter-information/Swarthmore-NSLVE-Campus-Report-2022-003370.pdf](http://www.swarthmore.edu/sites/default/files/assets/documents/voter-information/Swarthmore-NSLVE-Campus-Report-2022-003370.pdf)

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## VIII. REPORTING

As is our practice, this Action Plan will be posted on the College's voter registration website ([vote.swarthmore.edu](http://vote.swarthmore.edu)). The site is viewable by internal and external audiences — as are existing NSLVE reports dating back to 2016.

Additionally, GOTV regularly shares key strategies and findings with a range of stakeholders on campus. This includes members of SwatVotes (our student partner), the Division of Student Affairs (DOSA), the Academic Advisory Council, and various student affinity groups. We hope to present at a faculty lunch this fall prior to the November general election.

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## IX. EVALUATION

Evaluation of the work of the GOTV committee and progress toward stated goals is an ongoing process. The committee meets eight times a year as a group but the bulk of the committee's work happens between those meetings. As a result, meeting time is largely used to discuss and evaluate progress to determine what's working, what's not, and if a course-correction is needed.

### Surveys and Focus Groups

For the past several years, because of the absence of up to date information from NSLVE, GOTV has relied heavily on self-reported student data from College surveys to gauge voting turnout rates and attitudes towards voting — this will continue for the time being. As was mentioned in the goal's section, the committee will explore the feasibility of obtaining public

voting records for those students registering with a campus address to help gauge our voter turnout. While GOTV as a practice, tallies participation at all our various events — we will put additional energy into tracking and reflecting on our efforts to support students who are interested in voting outside of Pennsylvania.

Additionally, while GOTV is open and interested in receiving feedback from all of our students (voters and nonvoters alike), the committee has been proactive in inviting student affinity groups to mini focus group sessions to further flesh out their student experience of voting at Swarthmore and will continue to do so.

As before, evaluation will be done with an eye toward individual goals, and this planning document will be updated to reflect the outcomes of completed goals. In this way, the plan will be a living document, updated regularly to reflect successes, lessons learned, and new opportunities.