

## FINAL DRAFT

### Swarthmore College Get Out the Vote Committee 2024-2025 Action Plan

May 31, 2024

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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 registration and turnout rates trend upward (e.g., registered rate of eligibility Swarthmore students was at 66% in 2018 and 85% in 2020). This plan intends to build a thoughtful and strategic roadmap for our 2024-25 work by being mindful of our students’ needs and building on our previous successes.

As we draft this plan, we intend to continue with our proven outreach efforts to students about the importance of voting. In our work, GOTV attempts to engage in dialog with students in small groups and reflect on how students’ attitudes toward the upcoming general election (specifically) and voting (more generally) may be impacted by current events — be they local or global. We recognize two realities of our campus which have disrupted the typical patterns of student behavior which we rely on to plan our efforts.

First, there has been a rise in student activism which has led to protests. Some students have shared with us beliefs and attitudes that indicated they are, at best, uncertain that **“their vote can make a big difference as to what happens in our country”** or that **“their vote can lead to any real change.”** GOTV strives to be thoughtful about the range of sentiments students feel when it comes to voting. This election cycle, in addition to explaining the mechanics of voting, GOTV is strategizing 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). Additionally, GOTV hopes to work with our new Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to create spaces on campus where students can express feelings of discomfort or ambivalence about voting, elections, etc.

A second obstacle is that significant infrastructure construction on campus has changed how people move around campus, making it more challenging to engage students where we predict they might congregate or travel during the day. Scheduling tabling events before election day and finding sites for election day activities such as food trucks in highly visible areas has been a challenge.

The GOTV committee will oversee planning, assessment, implementation, and evaluation of its goals in collaboration with our on-campus and off-campus partners. Because the committee’s work is ongoing, this plan is as well. It will be a “living document,” updated regularly throughout the 2024-25 academic year to reflect new opportunities, changes, and outcomes.

—Pam Shropshire, committee chair, May 2024

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## **II. LEADERSHIP**

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

GOTV is led by Pamela Shropshire, Special Assistant for Presidential Initiatives in the Office of the President. Note: Chairing GOTV is part of the portfolio of the Special Assistant position.

Staff and faculty members of the committee are invited to join based on their known passion for the cause and/or because they bring helpful insights generally, or specifically in the context of Swarthmore’s campus and culture. Student members are involved in democratic engagement as members of SwatVotes (a Swarthmore student voting group), as Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows, and/or as Inclusive Excellence Fellows from Swarthmore’s Office of Inclusive Excellence and Community Development.

#### ***2023-24 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 | Associate Professor of Political Science & Executive Director of the Lang Center | Faculty              |
| Aqua    | Withers Carello | Class of 2025  |  | Student              |
| David   | Foreman         | Office of the Provost  | Director of Institutional Relations  | Staff                |
| Joshua  | Goldwyn         | Mathematics & Statistics Department  | Associate Professor  | Faculty              |
| Roy     | Greim           | Communications Office  | Associate Director, Web Communications   | Staff                |
| Danika  | Grieser         | Class of 2026  |  | Student              |
| Clare   | Hyre            | Office of Sustainability   | Associate Director of Sustainability   | Staff                |
| Emily   | Higgs Kopin     | McCabe Library   | Head, Digital Collections Strategy   | Staff                |
| Yulia   | Korovikov       | Admissions   | Associate Dean, Admissions   | Staff                |
| 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  | Health Sciences/Pre Law Advisor  | Staff                |
| Kristen | Smith           | Division of Student Affairs  | Registrar  | Staff                |
| Rebecca | Weintraub-Barth | Division of Student Affairs  | Director, Student Activities   | Staff                |

Note: The 2024-25 committee will be announced in September

**Campus Partners**

***Student Groups:***

- Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows
- Swarthmore QuizBowl
- SwatVotes

***Faculty/Staff:***

- Admissions
- Advancement
- Athletics Division
- Communications
- Division of Student Affairs
- Department of Political Science
- Global Engagement Office
- Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility
- Office of Inclusive Excellence and Community Development
- Office of the President
- Office of the Provost
- OneCard Office
- Registrar’s Office
- Swarthmore College Libraries

***Off-Campus Partners***

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

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**III. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS**

Swarthmore’s commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement is rooted in its Quaker history and values. Social justice, solving global problems, and supporting local communities are integral to the Swarthmore experience. Evidence of this tradition can be found today 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 commitment follow.

President Smith’s personal commitment to voting is evidenced by a video on the GOTV website. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hbAOn8vVaQ&t=8s>

### **Strategic Plan**

As Swarthmore College plans for the next chapter of our history, we are bringing members of our community together to implement the work of the College’s 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.

Goal Three 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. As was mentioned in the executive summary, GOTV hopes to work 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. Anticipated programming in the fall is a **campus-wide salon series on disinformation** that will precede the general election in November.

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

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.” Building on the success of the Lang Center, the College’s previous comprehensive campaign which concluded June 2020, raised \$98 million for programs that enhance Swarthmore’s social impact in local and global communities. These programs include sustainability research and advocacy, socially responsible leadership and entrepreneurship, and deepening connections to our local community through programs.

### **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

### Background

Swarthmore College has offered registration and voting information (including absentee voting information) for years via the College website, emails to students, and distribution of paper voter registration forms. Several offices and student groups on campus have made efforts over the years to encourage registration and voting, including debate watch parties, and efforts among groups and individuals to drive students to the polls. 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. This is 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 configuration of Swarthmore voting precincts, GOTV has been steadily building our relationship with regional officials.

This spring, the DELCO Office of Elections Operations reached out to the College to notify us of an opportunity for our students. The Office received a grant from the Help America Vote College Program that:

- Aims to engage University, College and Trade School students through PAID part-time/short-term work in election administration
- Offers options for participation:
  - At the Central Count facility at the Union Power Plant in Chester
  - As poll workers at the Delaware County Government Center in Media
  - As precinct poll workers on Election Day.

Not only is this an opportunity for our students to make money, it also offers a bird's eye view as to how elections are administered and the efforts undertaken by regional offices to keep elections safe and secure. We will encourage our students to apply to participate in this program in the fall.

**Research + Barriers to Voting**

While the GOTV committee is encouraged by gains in student registering and voting rates over the last few election cycles — particularly since the launch of GOTV — perceived barriers to voting are still held by some students.

***Registration & Turnout Rates***

Note:

- Here's a snapshot of voting rates between 2012 and 2020 as provided by NSLVE. Please note that the registration rate, voting rate of registered students, and voting rate of eligible students trend upward from 2018.
- FYI, while we have data from internal surveys, (the most recent disseminated in November 2023), the last NSLVE data received was for the 2020 general election.

|      | <b>Registration Rate</b> | <b>Voting Rate of Registered Students</b> | <b>Voting Rate of All Eligible Students</b> | <b>Voting Rate for All NSLVE Institutions</b> |
|------|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| 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 | Not yet available        | Not yet available                         | Not yet available                           | Not yet available                             |



### **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 GOTV 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 consistent since 2018:

- Confusion about the registration process
- The lack of information on absentee/mail-in ballots
- The distance to local polling stations
- Busy schedules
- Feeling that their votes would not make a significant difference
- "Bernie or Bust" sensibility (i.e., dissatisfaction if their ideal candidate isn't on the ballot)

Additionally, Swarthmore and several other Pennsylvania colleges have found Pennsylvania's online voter registration system to be problematic. The uploading of signatures is 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 perceived 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 when voting outside of Pennsylvania. (***"Planned to vote but found out to late my registration never went through and missed deadline for absentee ballot"***)
  - Note: Swarthmore's surveys seem to indicate an important shift in voting behavior since the onset of the pandemic. GOTV's survey found that a significant percentage of our students (approximately 39%) were registered to vote outside of Pennsylvania for the 2022 election cycle. 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.

From at 2023 Swarthmore student survey:

- ***“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.”***

As we refine our outreach strategy for the upcoming election cycle, the committee is considering how best to engage with students in ways that authentically reflect their experiences yet still affirm student voters’ capacity to have an impact. As we continue to navigate the uncertainties of this moment, GOTV will closely gauge the preferences and needs of students and regularly solicit feedback from students, allowing us to adapt our strategies and tactics as circumstances warrant.

**Financial and Other Support**

Though the GOTV committee does not have a dedicated budget from the College, the Office of the President has on occasion offered discretionary funds for specific strategies, as have other campus partners.

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.

For an assessment of our previous work, see our January 2023 report on our action plan. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iNsQzRvkkpj-A7ByVNabvZ08L9ge5B7o/view?usp=sharing>

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

### 2024-25 Goals

#### **Primary Goal**

For the 2024-25 election cycle, GOTV is aiming to match or exceed Swarthmore students' rates from the 2020 general election.

- 2020 registration rate of **88.8%** refers to the percentage of voting-eligible students who registered to vote
- 2020 voting rate of **85.4%** refers to the percent of registered students who voted on election day
- 2020 voting rate of **75.9%** refers to the percentage of eligible students who on voted on election day

#### **Secondary Goal**

As a secondary goal, GOTV will continue to focus on engaging traditionally unrepresented and disenfranchised student voters — specifically Black, Latinx, Asian, low-income, transgender and non-binary students.

Voting Rates by Race/Ethnicity per NSLVE

|                   | 2016 | 2018 | 2020 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|
| Asian             | 41%  | 35%  | 44%  |
| Black             | 56%  | 39%  | 53%  |
| Latinx            | 66%  | 46%  | 68%  |
| White             | 71%  | 61%  | 80%  |
| Two or More Races | 68%  | 55%  | 76%  |

Note: NSLVE data collection makes it difficult to discern the voting patterns of eligible Asian voters as it combines Asian American and Asian internationals in some instances. Also NSLVE doesn't track LBGTQ+ voters.

## **2024 Strategies & Tactics**

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

The following feedback from Swarthmore students 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
- 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 elections
- Encourage senior administration to cancel classes on election day (Note: Canceling classes doesn't have the broad support of Swarthmore faculty)

### ***Overarching Approach***

As before, 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 considers 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 will I cast my ballot — in person or by mail?
6. Is vote by mail an option in my region? If yes, how does that work?
7. If I decide to vote in person, where's my polling place? When will I go and how will I get there? What do I need to bring with me?
8. What should I contact if I have questions or run into problems?

### ***Strategy #1: Educate + 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, Millennials and Generation Z will comprise nearly half of all American voters in 2024. 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.** The College’s website ([www.swarthmore.edu/voter-information](http://www.swarthmore.edu/voter-information)) includes a comprehensive list of information on registering and voting geared specifically for college students. A dedicated email address ([vote@swarthmore.edu](mailto:vote@swarthmore.edu)) serves as a “hotline” for student voting questions and concerns.
- **Offer a Moodle (Swarthmore’s online course management tool) unit on voting.** This unit, coming into its third iteration, will be included in the College’s online student orientation offered to new students with a roll out this summer.
- **Register students during fall move-in days.** Once again, 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.
- **Spread the word through e-mails and flyers.** GOTV is well known for our emails (which use attention grabbing images) sent to the entire community on everything from voting by mail to election day tips. This messaging is supplemented by flyering in high-traffic areas. Additionally, GOTV intends to once again disseminate voter registration kits around campus.
  - **New this year: Create a bookmark.** The committee intends to produce a voting “crib sheet” in the form of a bookmark to help students stay on top of the various steps involved in registering to vote and casting their ballot.
- **Provide ongoing voter information and registration assistance to students — particularly in the fall.** This involves creating and publicizing a set schedule for voter registration tabling (e.g. at the College’s monthly Garnet Days when the entire community is invited to get together to socialize).
- **Share voting resources with eligible students studying abroad.**
- **Partner with student groups 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 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. That includes students from the Black Cultural, Gender & Sexuality, and Intercultural Centers; as well as 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.

- **Meet with faculty and 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 and the Administrative Advisory Council. GOTV will also brainstorm on 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 Colleges e-newsletter that serves the entire campus community including alumni, and *The Phoenix*, the campus’s student-run paper.
- **Share communications from administration.** GOTV will solicit voting messages from the President, Provost and others that can be shared with the community at large.

### ***Strategy #2: Help Students Navigate (Perceived) 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; struggle to keep on top of key electoral deadlines; 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.
- **Robustly roll out our partnership with TurboVote ([swarthmore.turbovote.org](https://swarthmore.turbovote.org)).** *“The only reason I didn’t vote this year was because I forgot to request a mail-in ballot from my home state.”* Swarthmore College has contracted with TurboVote, 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 expect that this tool will be 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 site (despite its relatively short distance 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. If an additional shuttle driver can be secured, GOTV will explore having a shuttle depart from our Athletics District which is on the edge of campus.
- **Work with the College's OneCard/ID Office.** GOTV will remind students whose preferred names differ from their legal names (e.g., transgender, non-binary, students who use a nickname because it is easier for native English speakers to pronounce) that the OneCard Office will work with them to ensure they have access to valid voting IDs that can mitigate potential barriers to in person voting.
- **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 upcoming election. 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 rewarding — after all, individual votes are the basis of our democracy.

**GOTV will...**

- **Make election day festive.** In addition to the organized rides to the polls, GOTV plans to host a pop-up on election day with food, music and other amenities for students — all with the goal of reminding students to take a break from their studies and exercise their right to vote. The committee is exploring creating a selfie station with a cutout of the College's mascot with a voting message for the general election.
- **Involve leadership.** GOTV will help to craft and then share fun and encouraging messages from the President and the Provost on the importance of registering and voting.
- **Host special events and other engaging activities.** GOTV is looking for entertaining ways to engage students on voting and the democratic process. This includes a repeat of a trivia

night that brought students, faculty and staff together for a fun evening of questions on presidential pets, the Electoral College, the Supreme Court and more. Also under consideration are film screenings (e.g. Girl State <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5GTaV7oZ2g>), a ballot hackathon, voting BINGO and/or panel discussions.

- **Participate in a video competition.** GOTV will join the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development again this fall to host a video voting competition for Pennsylvania college students. Last year’s competition encouraged Pennsylvania college students to produce funny, engaging and interesting videos that would educate college students, and other young people, about the importance of, and mechanics, of voting.

**Strategy #4: Expanding Partnerships**

GOTV will...

- **Build relationships.** The GOTV committee will continue to engage with groups both on and off campus to coordinate our efforts to provide education and resources to student voters. Of particular interest is deepening our connections with regional officials like the Delaware County Board of Elections and Delaware County Election Operations.

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**VII. NSLVE**

Swarthmore College and GOTV already participate in NSLVE.

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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 is our 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, 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 data from College surveys to gauge voting turnout rates — this will continue for the time being. The committee also has been proactive in inviting student affinity groups to mini focus group sessions to further flesh out their student experience of voting at Swarthmore. This includes the efforts of this year's Inclusive Excellence Fellow whose project "Voting and Inclusion at Swarthmore," sought out the perspectives of students of different marginalized identities. Through conversation, our Fellow sought to gain a better understanding of the motivations or dis-motivations students have to vote, specifically thinking about how students of different identities might be impacted by modern tactics of disenfranchisement, or by the modern political climate. The committee will review our Fellow's report which dropped this May over the summer and build on that work in the fall.

### **Democracy Audits**

New for 2024-25, Pam Shropshire, the GOTV Chair, has been selected to serve as a member of a "Democracy Audit Design Team." This new joint effort led by the AAC&U and Campus Compact is bringing faculty and staff from across the country together to audit existing campus democratic engagement activities and programming to help build an understanding of the current landscape. The Design Team's findings will lead to a guide that will enable campuses to audit their work — and ultimately lead to the development of collaborative tools and resources to scale and streamline democratic engagement across colleges and universities. GOTV anticipates that Pam's participation in this team will bring helpful knowledge and expertise back to the committee and our work with students.

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.