



BY JANET WALDMAN  
PHOTOS AUTUMN DRISCOLL

## Students get ringside look at campaign strategy during NH primary

The road to the White House is a bumpy one marked with forks, dead-ends and this year, COVID-19, as early primaries pare the field of Democratic presidential hopefuls. That road is set to wind through Wisconsin in August, where Joe Biden will almost certainly emerge from the perhaps virtual convention as the party's candidate for president.

Candidates don't walk this road alone. They have support in the trenches from campaign workers who are with them from the first primary in New Hampshire to the last in Puerto Rico. This year, 19 Quinnipiac students traveled to New Hampshire in January and again in February to offer their support, prior to the Feb. 11 primary, to the candidate whose ideals they admire. They spread their messages one house at a time.

Their journey was part of a 3-credit course taught by Scott McLean, professor of political science, who has taken students to the Granite State every four years since 2000. During their time there, the group attended the Manchester Democratic debate at Saint Anselm College and another gathering where all the candidates on the ballot spoke. Each student was asked to volunteer for two campaigns to witness the variation and diversity among them and to see the differences in organizational culture, human relations and strategy.



Jonathan Rosenblum '21, a political science major, leans in for a selfie initiated by presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden after he spoke at a rally in New Hampshire. In the background is John Hangen '23.





The students experienced grassroots politics in action as they canvassed for Joe Biden, Pete Buttigieg, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Andrew Yang. Several students also chose to work for Republican presidential candidate Bill Weld, who was challenging President Donald Trump, the presumptive nominee. Although none worked for Amy Klobuchar, some attended her rallies.

As the students navigated slippery snowbanks and icy sidewalks in neighborhoods in the Concord-Nashua-Manchester region, they learned just how much work canvassing can be and why it's often relegated to young, enthusiastic, even idealistic volunteers.

Ringling doorbells in single-digit temperatures, their breath clouding the air as they shivered on front doorsteps, they wondered whether the voters they'd encounter would be receptive to their message. Or whether the door would even be opened.

For Nicholas Ciampanelli '22, an economics/political science dual major, canvassing meant driving to Salem, New Hampshire, on behalf of Yang. "The area I was assigned was traditionally deep Republican," he said, adding that they encountered a number of citizens uninterested in their message "and some generally fed up with people knocking."

Ciampanelli was heartened that a few voters said Yang would be their No. 2 choice. But when the New Hampshire primary votes were counted, Yang—in last place with 2.8 percent—decided to drop out. When fellow Yang supporter Joshua Gorero '21 heard that news at the party Yang hosted on primary night, he felt frustrated. The political science

major/Spanish minor said he'd connected with Yang twice at rallies and canvassed for him along with Ciampanelli.

"The atmosphere [at the party] changed, from one of lively energy to one of defeat and utmost sadness," Gorero wrote in his reflective journal, a course requirement. "Yang then reminded the audience of the positive things that the campaign has done, urging them to continue the fight. As he continued his speech, the crowd started chanting '2024! 2024! 2024!' and I joined in this chant, conflicted with so many emotions." Gorero favored Yang for the "refreshing perspective and new ideas" he brought to the political conversation.

### A TALE OF TWO RALLIES

High-octane energy swirled from the rafters at the Buttigieg rally in Nashua the Sunday before Tuesday's primary. The line to get in snaked around the middle school venue and back to its parking lot. Four QU students were at the head of the line, having learned to arrive early at such events despite having to endure the brisk wind that made the 25-degree temperature feel much colder. They were rewarded when a campaign worker chose them to sit in the cheering section near the stage where Buttigieg outlined his pitch for the nation's top job. As loud party music filled the school gym, campaign workers rehearsed the cheer crew of about 75 so-called "political tourists," students and others who were jammed into the bleachers on stage left. They waved blue and gold signs and chanted "President Pete!" and "Boot edge edge!" on cue while some 1,800 people filed in.

Political science majors Samantha Murdock '21, left, and Senaj Mersim '21 canvas for Joe Biden in Manchester, New Hampshire.



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**— Gabriel Farberov '21**

Fox TV political reporters Bret Baier and Martha MacCallum were among the news media seated adjacent to the spectators while MSNBC's Lawrence O'Donnell roamed the four corners of the gym. All were soaking up the atmosphere and the crowd's reactions to Buttigieg to spice up their next broadcasts.

Matthew Hawryluk '22, a political science major/marketing minor, was among the four QU students chosen to sit up front. He had met Mayor Pete at a previous rally, bumping fists with him as Buttigieg greeted supporters. For Hawryluk, canvassing for Buttigieg in the Manchester and Bedford areas was an experience of extremes. “Some people loved having a conversation about him while others were sick of opening their doors,” he observed.

“I like Pete because he is a veteran and his message is about bringing the country together through bipartisanship,” Hawryluk said.

Glad-handing with voters is a tradition for candidates in New Hampshire, and rallies make that possible and personal. That same Sunday before the primary, former vice president Joe Biden addressed a throng of citizens in nearby Hudson. In contrast to Buttigieg's rally, the music was more understated and the crowd at the high school more reflective, less frenetic, and visibly in awe of the veteran politician they came to see.

Biden did not disappoint, according to the Quinnipiac students who attended. One of his most enthusiastic sup-

porters is Samantha Murdock '21. The political science major/legal studies minor encountered Biden when she and other students were chosen to stand behind him during a rally the day before at a Manchester theater. Afterward, the two chatted. Murdock told Biden she related to his strength in losing several family members, sharing that her father had battled leukemia and beat it, thanks in part to health care reform passed when Biden was Barack Obama's vice president.

“He really took his time talking to us. He asked me what I wanted to do, and I told him I wanted to be a lawyer, but also remain involved in politics,” Murdock said. “Joe Biden told me, ‘We need young people like you to get out there and vote because the turnout was so low in 2016.’” Murdock is president of the Quinnipiac Political Science Association and treasurer of the Quinnipiac University Democrats.

Biden told Murdock he appreciated the effort she and her classmates put into canvassing. To make sure people they spoke to voted, Murdock and fellow Biden canvasser Senaj Mersim '21, a political science major/legal studies minor, would ask them who they were leaning toward voting for and to name the time they planned to go to the polls, thereby voicing a commitment to vote.

Mersim said canvassing was harder than she anticipated, with many people choosing to ignore their doorbells. But she enjoyed relating to those who did answer them. “I was able to speak with voters who were passionate about politics and excited to be living in the first state to hold a primary election,” Mersim said.

“We were able to have an educational discussion where I informed them about my candidate and they told me their likes and dislikes about my candidate and others,” she said.

Zac Gormley '22 also favors Biden. “He's not as far left as Sanders, more center of the road, and has more of a chance to beat Trump,” he noted. At the rally, the political science major listened intently as Biden outlined his views on gun control, health care, opioid addiction and his electability. Gormley jumped to his feet to applaud Biden when he recounted that he lost his wife and daughter in a car accident, and lost a son to cancer, then said: “I'll be damned if I'm going to stand by and lose my country, too.”

### GETTING INTO THE GAME

New Hampshire gives Quinnipiac students an on-ground, rigorous introduction to the gears of presidential politics. McLean wants students to experience canvassing and to learn how to react—in real time—to the unfolding surprises, drama and hard work of a grassroots political campaign.

**Left:** Actor Kevin Costner, center, dropped by a Pete Buttigieg rally and posed with Professor Scott McLean, chair of Philosophy and Political Science, and Jensen Wilson '22.

**Right:** Tyler Delehoy '21, left, and Matthew Hawryluk '22 met Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski on the set of “Morning Joe” in Manchester.





1. A coveted ticket to the Democratic Debate. Students were fortunate to get seats and shake hands with most of the candidates afterward.

2. Matthew Hawryluk '22 was among four QU students chosen to be in the cheering section at a rally for candidate Pete Buttigieg, former mayor of South Bend, Indiana.

3. Sarah Annabi '23 was delighted to meet the candidate she most admired—U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

4. Ambar Pagan '22 traversed the streets in the Manchester, New Hampshire area stumping for U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren and met her at headquarters.

5. Banner-waving Bobcats hang out with Andrew Yang at his rally. From left are Nicholas Ciampanelli '22, George Tzimirangas '21, Joshua Gorero '21, Yang and Haktan Ceylan '22.

6. Mariam Shawish '22 chose to campaign for Bill Weld, former governor of Massachusetts, who was considering a run against President Donald Trump in February. She is shown with fellow Weld supporter Gabriel Farberov '21, right, along with Weld and his wife, Leslie Marshall, center.

One such surprise occurred when McLean and Jensen Wilson '22, a political science major, met actor Kevin Costner outside Webster Middle School, a polling site where she stood for four hours holding a Buttigieg sign. Costner had spoken at a rally the night before.

Before the trip, McLean told students that New Hampshire voters are known for being reluctant to share their support. "One of your jobs will be to gather intel for your candidate ... identify their supporters, hold them and deliver them to the polls." He added that voters are also known for switching allegiances, "some literally right up to the time they are walking in to mark their ballot."

As avid followers of politics, both Hawryluk and classmate Tyler Delehoy '21, a history major/political science minor, were excited to be part of the audience for a broadcast of MSNBC's "Morning Joe" the Monday before the primary. Meeting in their hotel lobby at 3:30 a.m., they got in line at 4 to be admitted to the 6–9 a.m. show, which was staged in the Manchester DoubleTree's restaurant.

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— Samantha Murdock '21

Guests included candidate Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet and a roundtable of well-known network commentators that made the early wakeup worthwhile. They enjoyed the show from a table close to the set that gave them an inside view into the production of a live TV show. To Hawryluk, the show underscored how important New Hampshire is as a primary state. Getting photos with co-hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski topped off the event.

Delehoy burned the candle at both ends that day, choosing to attend Bernie Sanders' appearance with The Strokes rock band that same night in Durham, along with fellow Sanders supporter Sarah Annabi '23, a political science major. Sanders' win the following day was more music to Annabi's ears. She summarized her New Hampshire experiences as amazing.

Annabi met the senator from Vermont at a weekend rally where she sat behind him as he spoke. They shook hands afterward and he posed for a selfie. "Bernie is super nice, a sweetheart; he's a core-driven, principled person," she said.

"He has had the same views for years upon years and sticks with them—he doesn't change his views because they are not popular," she added. While she hopes he will be the nominee, she said she would support whomever the party chooses.

Delehoy didn't get the chance to meet Sanders but did hear him speak. "It makes sense why his base is so young because he does seem to have a proactive plan for the future, and people in the crowd were very reactive to his message." He counted himself lucky to get into Sanders' crowded victory party, noting that the volume of people who were turned away demonstrated the popularity of the New Hampshire winner.

### WORKING FOR CHOICE

On the day of the primary, political science major Mariam Shawish '22 stood outside a Concord church hall being used as a polling site as a light rain deposited droplets on her ponytail

and moistened her Bill Weld 2020 sign. Fellow Weld supporter Gabriel Farberov '21 and a few other Weld supporters flanked her. Farberov, a political science major/management minor, is in the third year of a 6-year BA/JD program.

Weld, the governor of Massachusetts from 1991–97, has no chance of beating incumbent Trump, so why the interest? "He is more moderate and a better option than Trump, more socially liberal and fiscally conservative," she answered. The duo had logged nine hours at Weld headquarters the day before, calling voters, dropping off signs, and canvassing in Keene and Portsmouth.

"They are great—naturals—we'd hire them in a heartbeat," said Ryan Dumont, state director for Weld, as he shifted his sign to his left hand to greet Weld and his wife, who had just arrived and were approaching the line.

Weld thanked them for their hard work. "Older voters are excited to see the enthusiasm of young people knocking on their doors," he said. "Their generation will inherit the national debt, the melting polar ice caps, the Social Security age hike, among other issues, and they get that," he observed.

Shawish asked for a selfie and Weld obliged. "This is so cool, I gotta admit," she said, beaming at the photo.

Farberov said the best part of his New Hampshire experience was the empowerment he felt and the change he was able to make through grassroots activism. "I was able to directly talk to voters and see which issues mattered most to them. This experience fueled my political aspirations and made me realize that anyone can institute change through hard work and that politics affects us significantly more than we think."

Haktan Ceylan '22, a political science and philosophy dual major, put his all into campaigning for Buttigieg. They met at a rally. "He gripped my hand and said, 'You and the other canvassers make it worth it for me. Thank you so much,'" Ceylan recalled. The president of QU's International Student Association then gave the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, a bracelet depicting the Turkish flag. He told him, "I want you to have this because I believe you advocate for people such as myself who are being disregarded by the current president."

Waiting for his burger and fries at the Red Arrow Diner in Derry that night, Ceylan recounted a conversation with a Sanders supporter in a neighborhood where he was assigned that afternoon.

"I talked to her about my parents sacrificing in Turkey to move here [Danbury, Connecticut] so I could get a good education. I told her that seeing a black man [Obama] win gave me so much inspiration and hope because he had a funny-sounding name, and I have a funny name, and then I told her what I liked about Mayor Pete," he said.

"And then, she asked me, 'Are you positive that Buttigieg is going to be the one, as a student who studies political science?' And I said, 'Yes, I wouldn't be out here in the cold if I didn't.' And she said, 'You can put me down as a Buttigieg supporter.'"

Ceylan smiled as he remembered the small victory. "That is what makes it all worth it," he declared.