



Alverno College 2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Heidi Anderson-Isaacson

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Alverno College in Wisconsin for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 election.

Alverno College is committed to the ability of Effective Citizenship. For 50 years, Alverno faculty and staff have incorporated this ability into their courses, because it is the responsibility of educated citizens to participate in the civic life of the community in ways that make it better. Being a voter is an essential part of being an effective citizen, and so the College has recommitted itself to participation in the 2022 ALL IN Democracy Challenge and the Campus Vote Project.

The goals for Alverno College for the 2024 election are:

- To see 70% of our students vote in the upcoming general election
- To host events to educate students on different issues surrounding the upcoming election, the election system and hot button issues for candidates

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following, campus groups, and organizations:

Heidi Anderson-Isaacson – Dean of Student Development and Success
Yes -Youth Empowered in the Struggle (Student Organization)
Ann Romei – Assistant Dean of Students
Andrea Skyberg – Faculty, Art Therapy

Community Support:

Milwaukee Election Commission

- Jonatan Zuniga, Election Operations and Training Manager

- Jennifer Bennett, Training Manager
League of Women Voters
- Eloisa Gomez
Campus Vote Project

Commitment:

When former Alverno President Mary J. Meehan began her tenure in 2004, one of her first acts was to declare Presidential Election days as a campus holiday. She encouraged the entire college community to participate in elections in some way, not only by voting, but to seek other ways to be engaged in the process. That year, the Alverno College Poll Worker Project was born. The College partnered with the City of Milwaukee Election Commission to hold on-campus poll worker training sessions for students, staff and faculty. That year over 100 campus members, mostly students, worked as election inspectors at voting sites across the city. Since then over 500 students, staff and faculty have been trained to work the midterm and presidential elections, with many bilingual students stepping up to work the polls in primarily Spanish-speaking neighborhoods. The project has been the recipient of a U.S. Election Assistance Commission grant and in 2014 was honored with Wisconsin Campus Compact's Esther Letven Campus-Community Partnership Award. We continue this tradition through our support for encouraging voting and service during every election season. Faculty, staff, and students support election and GOTV activities as they embody the College's commitment to Effective Citizenship, one of Alverno's Eight Abilities. Effective Citizenship is a true dedication to engagement and participation in the democratic process. While this Ability is not all about politics and voting, it is about making an impact on your community. This includes, but is not limited to political involvement and voting.

Alverno College joined ALL IN in 2018 and has developed and submitted action plans in 2018, 2020, and 2022. President Christy Brown signed the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation in 2024.

We share information about the election system and process in a variety of ways. We have a daily countdown to the election sharing information regarding how to register, the ballot drop boxes in WI, ways to vote, how to get non-partisan information on candidates and ballot measures, etc. We have information posted around campus about registration and early voting. There is a weekly election discussion hosted on Thursdays over the lunch hour by one of our faculty members.

Landscape:

Alverno College is a Catholic, Franciscan liberal arts college, founded by the School Sisters of St. Francis, whose mission of educating women goes back to 1887. Currently our graduate and online programs are open to women and men, but our undergraduate program continues to support the College's mission of educating women only. Our student body (n=1300+) is one of the most diverse in the state, with over half of the students claiming non-white heritage. Alverno

was the first Wisconsin college/university to earn the designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. In addition, nearly 70% of our incoming students are first-generation.

Effective Citizenship is one of the College's Eight Abilities. Each of the Eight Abilities is considered a department and faculty are expected to choose one ability department to sit in, along with their academic discipline department. These interdisciplinary ability departments work to forge strong relationships between faculties of varying departments (representing all of the campus Schools), provide cross-discipline conversation and joint project planning and learning. The ability department is responsible for developing ability outcomes that are embedded into coursework across the curriculum. They also act as consultants for educators across the world who seek learning about how to work with abilities in their own curricula.

While the College's administration is fully supportive of all efforts related to Effective Citizenship and civic engagement, a dedicated Civic Engagement Office and staff has not been established. Currently, the Effective Citizenship Ability Department is the home of our Campus Compact membership, with support from the Experiential Learning Committee. Individual staff from the Student Activities and the Internship Program/Career Studio are the primary contacts for the All in Democracy Challenge and other related resources and opportunities. These staff seek out colleagues and students from various departments when campus partners are needed for projects and events and have found Student Affairs to be very willing partners. Not having a dedicated civic engagement office is a barrier when it comes to programming. To the College's credit, it has created a unique culture of collegiality across academic and administrative departments that make it easier to reach out to the various stakeholders on campus when opportunities present themselves.

A possible barrier to garnering student engagement is the fact that the campus is primarily a commuter campus. While the campus does have two residence halls, usually less than 200 undergraduate students live on campus in any one semester. Many of our students hold outside jobs while raising or supporting their families and managing their education.

In WI, it is required to have a photo ID in order to vote. We are able to print free Voter IDs for our students in the Dean of Students office Monday through Friday from 8:30am-5pm.

Election Information:

Fall General Election: Tuesday, November 5, 2024

- Last day to register online is 10/16/24
- Early Voting starts on 10/22/24

Spring Primary Election: Tuesday, February 18, 2025

Spring Election: Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Demographics:

- 72% of undergraduates are from Milwaukee County
 - 78% of all students are in-state (this is counting Mesa students as out-of-state, though they may be in state for their Alverno location)
- 71% of undergraduates are BIPOC
 - 49% of graduate students are BIPOC
 - 59% of all students are BIPOC
- 99.5% of undergraduate students are 18 or older
 - 27% of undergrads are non-traditional age (25 or older)

Goals:

Our institution's nonpartisan democratic engagement goals are:

- Increase student voter turnout rate to 70% in 2024 and 75% in 2026.
- Increase student voter registration rate to 80% in 2024 and 85% in 2026.
- Create a faculty and staff group (5 to 7 members) that is dedicated to ongoing programming and information sharing about elections and the political process throughout the academic year.
- President Christy Brown has signed the [ALL IN Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation](#)

Strategy:

Alverno College will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

1. We will be offering a Shuttle to Early Voting Locations between 10/22 and 11/3.
2. We will have a "Countdown to the Election" series on the digital boards around campus and possible social media. We will have 25 facts or information about voting on each sign for the countdown.
3. During our annual Community Day, the Voting Discussion Group brought up 4 topics that we thought could be a good conversation for students, faculty and staff to have about the upcoming election: Down Ballot voting, Religion and Politics, How to deal with the pressure around election season and voting, and 3rd Party Voting/Candidates
 1. We are hoping to set up some different times to hold conversations on these topics.
4. The League of Women Voters have already been on campus during our annual Community Day but they plan to host an event on Campus around the upcoming election.
5. On Constitution Day (9/17/24), Student Engagement and Leadership hosted tables where students could learn about and complete the voter registration process and also learn about how the Constitution laid out information for our current Election System. This was the same day as National Voter Registration Day.
6. We produced a [get out the vote video](#) that was on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. You can go to our social media pages to view. It was posted on Oct. 4.
7. We have a student organization that is solely focused on Get Out the Vote efforts.
8. The campus is closed on election day so that everyone can vote and participate in the process.
9. Website - <https://www.alverno.edu/Student-Affairs-Vote>

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

The Effective Citizenship Ability Department and the Leadership team will review the NSLVE data against the goals set for the project. We will also enlist feedback from the various stakeholders on campus about how they viewed the project's success (or lack of success).

Reporting:

We intend to use 2024 NSLVE data to inform our faculty and administration about past Alverno voting as a means of encouraging 2026 improvement. We will do this by releasing the data along with goals and challenges for the upcoming election and resources for stakeholders to give to students. Our Marketing and Communications office often uses positive trends in voting or creative voting promotion events in their media releases and usually receives at least some coverage. We hope to use Alverno's 2024 voting numbers as a challenge for improvement in the 2024 election campaign, potentially with some kind of fun celebration if student voting numbers improve from one year to the next.

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/alverno-college/>.

We will post our Action Plan and NSLVE reports on the Voting website. This information will also be shared with the Student Development and Success Director's Group for further support and programming.