

ALVERNO COLLEGE – Milwaukee Wisconsin
2020 ALL IN DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE

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.

Now that the COVID-era recedes, we are resuming in person programming and voter registration. Our goal is to achieve full eligible student voter participation.

Activities will be organized by the leadership team listed below and will be implemented with the assistance of our Campus Vote Project Fellows.

Leadership

Project leadership

- Tom Bottoms, Director, Student Leadership and Engagement
- Sue Leister, Chair, Experiential Learning Committee, Project Director, Alverno Poll Worker Project, Director, Internship Program, Career Studio
- Megan Anderson, Chair, Effective Citizenship Ability Department, Asst. Director, Internship Program, Career Studio
- Breanna Taylor, student fellow with Campus Vote Project.

Campus stakeholders

- Joseph Foy, Vice-President, Academic Affairs
- Kevin Casey, Dean, School of Arts and Humanities
- Kelly Cole, Communications Specialist, Alverno Marketing & Communications

Community Support

- Milwaukee Election Commission
- League of Women Voters
- 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 mid-term 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](#) .

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 imbedded 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, CEEP, 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.

NSLVE DATA

Alverno College has participated in the NSLVE project since 2012. In 2019, the College received a Platinum Award from the National All-In Democracy Challenge for its high student-voting rate in the 2018 mid-term election. The national student-voting rate in 2020 was 66%. 59.9% of Alverno students voted in the 2020 presidential election, a 2.7% decrease from 2016, but a 6.7% increase from the 2018 midterms. This may be explained by historically long lines and chaotic changes in polling places throughout the city in the 2020 election.

The NSLVE report shows majors related to biology and and healthcare showed large decreases that account for most of our change from 2018 to 2020. We will use targeted efforts that enlist faculty to help engage with students in those majors for 2020.

Strategy

As described under “Landscape” Alverno’s commitment to effective citizenship is imbedded in our curriculum. Faculty teach to and create assignments and activities for, students to understand their responsibility to be civically-engaged. Our ability-based curriculum has been part of Alverno since 1971, which shows the College’s long-term commitment.

Our strategy for fall 2022 is early and steady encouragement for students to make a plan for in person or absentee voting, beginning with our orientation process over the summer and enforced by programming and opportunities for easy registration once the semester has begun. We are working backwards from registration deadlines to maximize the effectiveness of our programming at times when the election is most on student minds, but far enough out for them to act.

Examples of Registration Activities

- Work with Student Affairs and the student orientation planning committee to build voter registration reminders and ‘Make A Plan’ into the orientation activities throughout the summer.
- National Voter Registration Day celebration and event (Thursday, Sept 22, 2022)
- “Why I Vote” slide series that features Alverno students. Shown on the TV screens throughout campus. Posters with featured students posted on campus. *These can also be converted to individual social media blasts to students*
- Support from Residence Life – Info/registration session in the residence halls related to voting and voter registration. Engage the floor Community Advisors in this process
- Weekly tabling in the Commons where students can register online to vote – partner with League of Women Voters, coupled with regular communications to students about how to register to vote online on their own.
- Highlight voter registration during Alverno’s annual Community Day (Wednesday, October 5th)
- Class visits about the importance of voting from staff or student fellows.
- Emails to faculty with information about student voting in the last two elections (as per the NSLVE report) and encourage conversation among faculty about how to boost participation, along with resources.
- Regular updates on state voter registration and voting decisions (via social media)
- Alverno will use buttons in September and October to encourage other students to make a voting plan.

Examples of Get Out The Vote Activities

- Wisconsin gives opportunities to vote early. Early Voting group walking trips to vote at Zablocki Library (dates to be determined after early voting calendar is released by the Milwaukee Election Commission)
- " Donut Forget to Vote" is going to be a voter information fair (with donuts) with the focus on helping people find their polling site and make a plan to get there on Election Day.
- On Election Day, "Get Out The Vote" tables will be reserved in the Commons Lobby for most of the day. Focus on helping people find their polling places and connect with resources for getting a ride to the polls (e.g. volunteer drivers; Bounce Milwaukee, Lyft).
- Group voting trips for dorm students to the polling site nearest Alverno (across the street) – celebration in numbers!
- Discipline-specific GOTV work. We hope to engage faculty in majors that are particularly tied to civic engagement to help increase turnout in their areas and hopefully help us net more volunteers.

Other Election-related Activities

- Partnering with the Milwaukee Election Commission for Alverno's Poll Worker Training Project. Training sessions will be held online by the MEC and students will be encouraged to attend these sessions and work on election day in November. Students are then assigned to a polling site near their home campus or elsewhere in the city. Spanish-speaking students will be trained to be bilingual poll workers too. Students also learn about applying for absentee ballots. The campus has been running this project since 2004. Unlike on Presidential Election Day, we do not cancel classes for Midterm Election Day, but students can talk with their faculty if they have a class conflict that day.

Reporting

We intend to use 2020 NSLVE data to inform our faculty and administration about past Alverno voting as a means of encouraging 2022 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 2022 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.

Evaluation

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).

We will seek self-assessments from our fellows and other student stakeholders to assess their experience and how we can improve our programming and their supervision/support.

Summary

Alverno College is committed to engaging student in GOTV activities, resulting in full eligible student participation. We will enlist our campus and community partners to plan in-person and online events. We feel

uniquely situated to be successful in this endeavor due to our long tradition of educating students on the importance of civic engagement.

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