



## Berkeley College 2022 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Heather Eaton-Dwyer

### **Executive Summary:**

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Berkeley College in New Jersey and New York in 2024. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 election cycle with a specific emphasis on turnout based on Berkeley College's 2022 NSLVE data. The goals for Berkeley College for the 2024 election are focused on increasing student voter turnout while continuing to support high student voter registration levels.

### **Leadership:**

Our leadership team includes the following:

Heather Eaton-Dwyer – Dean of Students, chair of this working group

Steven Bruenjes – Dean, Academic Advisement

LaTysha Gaines – Campus Operating Officer, Woodland Park campus; senior administration representation on this working group.

James Marshmon – Director, Student Development and Campus Life for the Woodland Park, NJ and Woodbridge, NJ campuses

Monserrat Miranda (2024-2025 academic year) – Student Government Association Vice President for Marketing, student lead for Berkeley College SAVE (Students Approaching Voter Engagement) student organization.

Faculty TBD – the working group's previous faculty representative retired in the 2023-2024 academic year, and the search has commenced for a new faculty representative.

Suzeana Stewart – Director, Student Development and Campus Life for the Newark, NJ and New York City, NY campuses

Shaday Rosario – Program Coordinator, Student Development and Campus Life for the Newark, NJ and New York City, NY campuses and Student Government Advisor.

## **Commitment:**

Berkeley College has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2021.

Berkeley College's governing board, president and senior leadership demonstrate their commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement by supporting initiatives that educate students about the democratic process and encourage them to become engaged in their communities. The College reinforces its mission of empowering students to achieve lifelong success in dynamic careers by introducing students to civic engagement and providing them with opportunities to develop as responsible and informed citizens. Activities explore topics such as social justice, diversity and inclusion, racial equality, gender equity, women's rights, military and student veterans' affairs, leadership development, prison reform, educational equity and access, immigration, environmental sustainability, and other areas.

Throughout the year, elected officials are invited to visit the campus to meet with the College's leadership and students. These meetings are hosted by President Diane Recinos and Chairman Kevin Luing. During these meetings, students participate in conversations with elected officials who hold local, state, and federal office.

Academically, the Provost and School Deans endorse an interdisciplinary approach to civic engagement that provides students with project-based opportunities in their studies. This method allows students to learn about challenges facing communities and provide potential solutions through their coursework.

This approach is exemplified by the Berkeley College Honors Program. Honors students produce projects that address social issues and are involved in field trips, plenary sessions, co-curricular activities, and special events pertaining to their selected topics. Students present their projects in public forums and seminars held on campus on an annual basis. The College's leaders and representatives from throughout the institution attend these seminars, which are open to the general public. These seminars are documented in the College's newsroom and disseminated to the public. President Recinos attends each event, provides remarks and interacts with students.

Berkeley College Honors Program students, along with Student Leaders, and members of the Berkeley College Varsity Soccer team continued to promote voter registration and turnout during the College's participation in the 2023 and 2024 annual NJ Ballot Bowl, and a cohort of student leaders recently attended the 2024 New Jersey Voting Summit. Members of our Action Planning working group leadership team who work directly with students attending Berkeley College's New York City campus have also been attending the ALL IN NY Voting Community of Practice conference calls beginning in September 2024.

Throughout the years of Berkeley College's participation with ALL IN initiatives, the College has been among the sponsors of diversity and civic engagement initiatives such as the American Conference on Diversity's annual Diversity Issues in Higher Education Conference; the Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey's 20-Year Summit; the Institute for Latino Studies Leadership Institute; and the City & State Education Summit. The College participates in the annual New York City Veterans Day Parade and other military and veterans' initiatives throughout the year. Berkeley also produces annual women's entrepreneurship forums; co-sponsors post-election panel discussions with elected officials and presents panel discussions

with elected women in public office. Berkeley College's president, chairman and other Board of Trustee members, and administrators participate in a variety of these initiatives.

In June 2023, the Alfred H. Baumann Free Public Library in the Borough of Woodland Park moved to the Berkeley College Woodland Park Campus while the Borough embarked on the construction of a new facility. The Berkeley College community has partnered with the Woodland Park Public Library at Berkeley College for numerous civic engagement events in 2023 and 2024, including presentations by the County Clerk's Office designed to educate and recruit poll workers, combined College/Community voter registration drives, and most recently, an interactive presentation by the League of Women Voters on "Why Voting Matters."

Through the Office of Career Services, students can apply for internships and employment opportunities in government. Many students have gained professional experience and enhanced their knowledge of civic engagement by working in internships for elected officials and government agencies in local municipal, borough, and state government offices. The placement of students in these positions is documented by Career Services.

These experiences illustrate Berkeley College's mission in action and the commitment of the College's president and leaders throughout the institution to providing students with opportunities to engage in the democratic process. The alignment of civic learning and democratic learning experiences with the Berkeley College mission and Strategic Plan further demonstrates the commitment of the governing board, president, and senior leadership to cultivating student participation in the democratic process.

### **Landscape:**

Berkeley College is a private 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2019.

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Berkeley College has 3,369 students who commute to attend classes on campus or attend classes remotely online. Additional data for Berkeley College, New Jersey can be found on the National Center for Education Statistics website [HERE](#) and additional data for Berkeley College, New York can be found [HERE](#).

Berkeley College has authorized NSLVE data sharing with ALL IN.

### **Berkeley College – Woodland Park:**

- had a 2022 campus voting rate of 14.6%.
- had a 2022 voter registration rate of 71.0%.
  
- had a 2020 campus voting rate of 51.5%.
- had a 2020 voter registration rate of 72.2%.
  
- had a 2018 campus voting rate of 26.9%.
- had a 2018 voter registration rate of 65.0%.

### Berkeley College – New York:

- had a 2022 campus voting rate of 14.4%.
- had a 2022 voter registration rate of 73.8%.
  
- had a 2020 campus voting rate of 46.3%.
- had a 2020 voter registration rate of 74.4%.
  
- had a 2018 campus voting rate of 25.9%.
- had a 2018 voter registration rate of 66.6%.

ALL IN has recognized our institution with the following: 2020 Bronze Seal; Most Engaged Campuses list 2022.

### **Goals:**

Although our student voter registration rates were stable between 2020 and 2022, our student voter turnout showed a decline of 12.3 percentage points among enrolled New Jersey students from 2018 to 2022 and a decline of 11.5 percentage points in student voter turnout among enrolled New York students from 2018 to 2022.

This has resulted in us shifting to focus more strongly on voter turnout while still maintaining our active and successful institutional and peer-to-peer voter registration initiatives. Our goals for 2024 are:

- To increase our student voting rate to 30% for 2024.
- To increase our student voter registration rate to 75% in 2024.
- To increase co-curricular programming (synchronous, asynchronous, virtual, in-person, and hybrid) by an additional 10% in 2024 with additional programs focusing on voter turnout (we achieved our programming goal for 2022).

### **Strategy:**

Berkeley College will implement these strategies, initially developed in our 2020 and 2022 Action Plans, to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation:

Since our 2020 Action Plan, we have successfully launched and maintained a multi-layered plan incorporating active and passive engagement and education around student voter registration and turnout. We revisit this plan and adjust as needed each semester. In addition to active tabling, internal social media engagement (Viva Engage), emails, and information shared across platforms regularly accessed by students, we have embedded civic and voter education into on campus, hybrid, and online First Year Seminar courses.

We constantly seek to remove barriers for students, and through feedback from students and direct observation in 2022 found that both a lack of time and lack of easily accessible

information are two of the most common barriers to voter registration and voter participation. In response to these needs, in August 2022 we developed a centralized site in our internal Libguide platform that directs students to the information and forms they need through links to state electronic voter registration forms, state election information sites, as well as to the ALL IN to Vote site. We then created a QR code that students can easily use and that our voter registration and voter education team members can use to best guide students to the e-forms or information needed. We continue to use and update this site as it is convenient for students to access.

This QR code link to the Voter Registration and Information Libguide is not only used by student voter education team members but is also posted in high-traffic areas around campuses, is included in weekly event emails in the beginning of every semester (which have a high open and click-through rate) and is also included in our New Student Orientation courses in Canvas.

We kick off our voter registration and education programs and intentional student engagements every year with our Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day tabling and information displays, in 2024 we partnered with the League of Women Voters for our National Voter Registration Day kickoff event. We do not limit our programming and outreach to the fall semester, however, but continue student civic and voter engagement programs and events throughout the academic year. Our student leaders are essential to these efforts as student-to-student engagement draws larger numbers of students to events and tables, and results in greater participation in discussions on our internal social media platform.

In addition to continuing with the strategies outlined above, we have added the following for our 2024 Action Plan:

- Customized and added the Ask Every Student voter education and registration modules available in Canvas Commons into our Student Orientation course on Canvas.
  - To date 103 unique students have visited the modules 173 times with the “What’s on your State’s Ballot” page and the “Register to Vote” page being the two most visited sections.
- Participating in communities of practice: attending the 2024 New Jersey Voting Summit and participating in ALL IN NY Community of Practice conference calls.
- Partnering with the League of Women Voters on “Why Voting Matters” to empower students to vote and foster a deeper understanding of the electoral process.
- Launching a “why does *your* vote matter” campaign across Berkeley College Campuses where students post their reasons why voting is important on bulletin boards in high traffic areas for other students to read.
  - Online students will participate in this same activity in our Virtual Student Lounge on Viva Engage (Berkeley College’s internal social media platform) and on Padlet.
- Rebranding our voter registration and pledging to vote table events to “Bagels and Ballots” to attract more student foot traffic.
- Student leaders have created a new SAVE (Students Approaching Voter Engagement) peer-to-peer education initiative after attending the 2024 New Jersey Student Voting Summit.
- Hosting “Get to Know your Ballot” events where students can learn where to find their district’s ballot and how to find non-partisan information about candidates running for federal, state, and local offices as well as any ballot measures or amendments.

- Posting and discussing the National Voter Education Week toolkit resources along with the resources available at <https://allintovote.org/>

### **Evaluation:**

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

In addition to using our current and future NSLVE voting data, we assess the efficacy of specific programs, classroom presentations, and tabling events through co-curricular program evaluations. Program evaluations are completed electronically by student participants at the end of relevant presentations or programs to help determine if learning outcomes are being met in areas of civic learning and democratic engagement.

Upon receiving the 2022 NSLVE data in June 2024, we began asking students if there were any barriers to voting or reasons they or someone they knew had not voted, and the following answers are most frequent: lack of time (which was also the most frequent answer in 2022); a feeling that “my vote does not matter”; and not knowing the candidates/not liking the candidates. This led us to partnering with the League of Women Voters in fall 2024 to launch our “Why does your vote matter” campaign, our “Get to Know Your Ballot” programming, and the development of our peer-to-peer SAVE (Students Approaching Voter Engagement) initiative.

### **Reporting:**

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN’s website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/berkeley-college/>. It will also be shared electronically with the President’s Office, the Chairman of the Board, The Provost’s Office, and other administrative and academic areas.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our NSLVE reports which are posted on our campus page on ALL IN’s website.