ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge

Colorado College 2024 Democratic Engagement Action Plan
Developed by: CC Votes Collaborators

I.   Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Colorado College in Colorado for the 2024 election. Specifically, this action plan was co-created by CCVotes, a cross-campus coalition that coordinates get-out-the-vote and voter education efforts leading into election cycles. The purpose of this action plan is to strategize for how to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout for the 2024 general election, especially within demographic groups with relatively lower voting rates at CC in recent years; and encourage civic engagement in political and civic processes beyond our campus. Core strategies include increased visibility, strategic communications, and support for voter registration and voting; deepened strategic collaboration among on-campus and off-campus stakeholders; and leveraging the convenience of a new Voter Service and Polling Center (VSPC) on our campus to remove any existing barriers to voting.

II.   Leadership:

Our voter turnout and education work is organized through a campus/community coalition named CCVotes. This coalition has historically been organized on our campus around presidential elections and gone "into recess" until the next presidential election. However, our goal moving forward is for this coalition to meet on a quarterly basis to coordinate efforts and communications, share updates and plans, and assess and improve our collective strategies for all elections – municipal, state, and federal. Additionally, our hope is to both increase student turnout, but also encourage the CC community to engage with the GOTV efforts of the wider community through supporting efforts of nonprofit partners in the coalition. Coalition members come from various areas and divisions within the college, and include nonprofit partners who work with a diverse variety of stakeholders and attend to historical inequities in political voice and participation through a focus on marginalized communities.

This coalition is organized by staff of the Collaborative for Community Engagement, including:
- Dr. Jordan Travis Radke, Director of Community Impact
- Niki Sosa Gallegos, Assistant Director for Community Partnerships

This coalition has cross-campus representation from:
- The Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing
  - Miriam Roth, Internal Communications Manager
- Student Life and Campus Activities
  - Edwin Hamada, Associate Vice President

- o   Erika Perry-Tuitel, Assistant Director of Campus Activities
- Colorado College Student Government Association
- Political Science Department
    - o   Dr. Elizabeth Coggins, Associate Chair
    - o   Dr. Dana Wolfe
- Events Team Staff
    - o   Samantha Wilson, Assistant Director, College Events
- Student Leaders of Politically-Oriented Clubs
    - o   Posy Vogt, CC Young Democrats
    - o   Mackenzie Wagner, Bonner Fellowship

Our campus works with these following nonprofit partner staff:
- Alainna Belknap, Executive Director of Colorado Common Cause
- Andrew Barton, Programs & Engagement Coordinator, Common Cause
- Jorge Hernandez, Regional Lead Organizer, New Era Colorado
- Arianna Morales, Organizing Director, New Era Colorado
- Mike Williams, Executive Director, Citizen's Project
- Sandra Collins, League of Women Voters and NAACP
- Shelly Roehrs, League of Women Voters
- Terri Weber, League of Women Voters
- Chuck Montoya, Colorado Latinos Vote

In the event of staff turnover, we will invite other representatives from the areas and organizations above to this ongoing coalition space. Collective meetings support collective memory, which is useful for succession planning and transitions. Logistically, we have created a Microsoft Teams site to house agendas, notes, and related documents, all in the service of continuity should there be transition in the individuals that comprise the coalition.

III.   Commitment:

Colorado College's liberal arts education is rooted in critical thinking, courageous conversations, civil discourse, and creative and collaborative problem-solving, all in the quest to build a more just world. The college aims to prepare students to be informed, active citizens, and engaged community members, which includes making their voices heard through voting. Colorado College's commitment to developing our students into lifelong engaged citizens is nothing new, reflected in our mission to "develop habits of intellect and imagination that will prepare students for learning and leadership throughout their lives," and core institutional value to "encourage engagement and social responsibility at local, national, and global levels."

This mission is clearly reflected in CC's efforts to provide the campus community with the information and resources they need to participate in the democratic process. These efforts are also one piece of a much wider spectrum of support provided by the college's Collaborative for Community Engagement to mobilize our campus community to engage in ongoing democratic processes and collective work through a number of pathways - political work, community-engaged learning courses, community engagement opportunities ranging from student organizations to community-based internships, community organizing efforts, community-engaged research. The Collaborative for Community Engagement also works to intentionally prepare students for and

encourage students to reflect on that work, to ensure students are developing into lifelong changemakers and democratic citizens.

In 2022, President L. Song Richardson signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation. Our commitment to political civic engagement is evident in its inclusion in core messaging our students receive during New Student Orientation (incorporated into mandatory programming), and college-wide messaging around voter registration and voting during the first and final weeks of the school year, and personal messaging from our President around elections. Voting information is easily accessible through a web resource hub called CCVotes.

IV.   Landscape:

Colorado College is a private 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2016. Colorado College has 2,388 students, primarily undergraduate with 31 graduate students. According to the most recent data available (fall 2023), 67.7% of students identify as white, 25.9% as BIPOC, and 1.1% as international students. 55.4% of the student body identify as female, 42% as male, 1.8% as non-binary, and .7% as transgender. 10% of students are first-generation college students, and 13.3% of students are Pell-eligible. Our students join us from 48 countries, and 78.4% of students are from out-of-state.

Given our substantial out-of-state population, we have learned that a core strategy for political engagement is early information on voter registration should students wish to vote within the state of Colorado. We heavily publicize voter registration and provide a number of resources to register during New Student Orientation, which I think has been a very effective strategy in increasing voter registration and ultimately turnout.

We live in a voter-friendly state, where voter registration and voting are easy and convenient with mail-in voting. Still, in the past, one of our core challenges was transportation. We are a small residential campus and many students do not own cars and are less familiar with navigating the city. We have provided a number of resources to help get students to the polls, and get their ballots to ballot boxes, in prior years. We are excited to share that in the Spring of 2023, under the leadership of our longtime partner New Era Colorado, CC students testified for a state bill that changed state law to require VSPCs to be placed on private, in addition to public, campuses and lowered the enrollment threshold for this requirement from 3,000 to 2,000 students. As a result, Colorado College will now host a VSPC in our main student center for the general election and a ballot drop box near our main student center. This ease and convenience will address root causes and barriers to voting, and we are hopeful this will further increase political participation on our campus. Our NSLVE data shows that while only 18% of student voters did so in person in 2020 (a statistic shaped by the pandemic), 36% voted in person in 2018 and 35% in 2016. We are confident a VSPC will be a heavily utilized resource.

We have seen a rising interest in democratic and political engagement in recent years, as evidenced in our 84.6% voting rate in the last presidential election. Our institution has been recognized in the past by ALL IN for these awards: 2020 CO Campus Voting Challenge: Highest Voter Registration - 4-year & Highest Voter Turnout - 4-year Awards, and was designated as a

Platinum Campus in the 2018 midterm election and 2020 presidential election. We have been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals: 2018 Gold, 2020 Platinum.

NSLVE data, as detailed below, does illuminate some disparities in our voting rate by different demographic groups, and this year we will be more attentive to these sub-populations.

V.   NSLVE

Colorado College has authorized NSLVE. We are proud of our overall voting rate and would like to keep up the momentum we have gained in the past few election cycles. And, the NSLVE study reveals persisting participation gaps that we aim to address in the service of full and equitable inclusion in the political process.

Our institution had a 2020 campus voting rate of 84.6%, with a 2020 voter registration rate of 94%. Overall, our general election voting rate is substantially higher than what we see in midterm cycles. For example, our institution had a 2018 voter turnout rate of 62.7%, with a registration rate of 90%.

We did have inequities in our voting rates by racial identity in 2020, as is evident in the following data points on voting rates:
- 87% of students identifying as white
- 79% of students identifying as two or more races
- 75% of Hispanic students
- 73% of Black students
- 40% of Asian students

We also have inequities by sex, in that 81% of females but only 76% of males voted. We also see a slight decline as students progress toward their degree; 81% of first years voted, but only 76% of upper level students.

VI.   Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals are to continue an upward trend in voter registration and turnout, while recognizing that we are already quite high in both metrics.

1. Increase student voter registration rate to 96% in 2024.
2. Increase student voter turnout rate to 87% in 2024.

Within these rates, we would like to close gaps between racial identity groups and by sex. Specifically, we would like to see voting rates within all demographic groups hit at least 80%.

While we will prioritize exercising the right to vote for our students and campus community, a close secondary priority is encouraging deeper participation in political and civic processes by engaging in wider community efforts. We will measure this by the number of CC stakeholders who actively engage in the work of our coalition nonprofit partners, with a goal of a 50% increase from the last election cycle.

VII.   Strategy:

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

- Closely collaborate with New Era Colorado and Colorado Latinos Vote to provide recurring, peer-to-peer voter registration drives and get out the vote tables.
  - Large push during Colorado College move-in, to target new first year arrivals, many of whom are moving to CO from out-of-state and need to get registered in CO. Collect pledge to vote postcards from every student, in order to use contact information to turn students out to vote via call/text in Oct/Nov.
  - Partnering with student leaders and volunteers to host voter registration tables from August Back to School, through the end of the Voter Registration Drive form collection period (8/22 - 10/13), including a student-led table on National Voter Registration Day.
  - Host a student Leader Voter Registration Training the first week of classes.
  - Beginning when Voter Service Centers open (10/24), host 8 get out the vote tables (some student-led, others led by New Era with student involvement). Table goals are centered around making specific vote plans with students (including how to get registered), answering questions about voting, and printing IDs for students whose ballots are marked "ID required."
    - Use Election Day and Election Day Eve for one large final push
- Host and heavily advertise a Voter Service and Polling Center (VSPC) and voter drop box on Campus.
  - Coordinate with campus communications and key student leaders for a robust communications campaign to ensure students are aware of and use the VSPC and voter drop box.
- Comprehensive Strategic Communications Plan
  - Update and maintain a comprehensive web resource ([CCVotes] site) to support students in navigating how to get registered, prepare to vote, and vote in elections.
  - Send comprehensive information to all students via email in the first and last week of school on how to get registered to vote, update voter registration, and vote in upcoming elections.
  - Provide a visual display (very large letters that spell "VOTE") in a highly trafficked main student center for the month prior to the election to increase awareness of upcoming opportunities to vote and encourage the campus community to exercise their right to do so.
  - Coordinate with the President's Office to send a Presidential message right before the election to encourage the campus community to vote.
  - Encourage new students to exercise their right to vote during New Student Orientation "Sense of Place" programming, which emphasizes active citizenship.
- Hire a CCVotes Student Director as part of the community engagement office (Collaborative for Community Engagement) student intern team to coordinate regular strategy meetings and collaboration among all campus and off-campus partners that work on voter engagement and turnout.
- Promote voter education programming and media in partnership with local nonprofits such as Citizens Project and League of Women Voters.

- Work strategically to engage BIPOC students and males in the political process, through targeted outreach with campus affinity groups and close collaboration with local nonprofits promoting political inclusion and addressing identity-based voting inequities.
- Host the Sondermann Presidential Symposium, a speaker series of political commentators and experts. Sponsored by the Political Science Department, speakers are also invited to participate in lunch talks and class visits. This year's speaking events include:
  - Eddie Glaude Jr. – speaker, historian, and media pundit
  - Wesley Lowery – speaker and journalist
  - Beth Malmskog – CC math professor
  - Post Election Panel of Colorado Political Scientists to help digest and understand the results
- Host activities and programming to support student mental health and wellness leading up to the election and after.

VIII.   Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

We will use our NSLVE voting data to evaluate whether our strategies have continued the trend of increasing voter registration and turnout on our campus, and whether we have addressed demographic disparities within such rates.

As mentioned briefly above, we will begin to organize quarterly CCVotes meetings among campus and community stakeholders. Regular meetings of this coalition will enable us to debrief and assess efforts in an ongoing way, as well as determine additional goals and metrics for our campus.

IX.   Reporting:

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

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

The NSLVE reports will be shared via messaging from Colorado College's Collaborative for Community Engagement. The ALL IN action plan and NSLVE reports will be posted on the CC Votes website for interested parties to access.