

## Colorado Mesa University 2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Tim Casey, CMU

### Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Colorado Mesa University in Colorado 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. The goals for Colorado Mesa University for the 2024 election are:

- Help register CMU students to vote in the election
- Inform students about how to vote in Mesa County and in their home districts where they might be registered
- Help inform the students of CMU and the larger public about the issues and candidates on the ballot
- Develop civic engagement and effective civic discourse on campus and in the broader community
- Partner with campus and community organizations to achieve these goals

### Leadership:

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

“Mav the Vote” Steering Committee – responsible for coordinating all action on this plan  
Tim Casey, PhD – Professor of Political Science, Director of the Natural Resource Institute  
Holly Oberle, PHD – Assistant Professor of Political Science  
Derek Wagner – Vice President of External Affairs and Community Relations  
Kyle Patten – Student, President of the Political Science Club  
Wyatt Smith – Student  
Kiah Petree – Student – Leadership in Student Government

### Partner Organizations on some of the events planned

League of Women Voters Grand Junction chapter and the Uncompahgre Valley chapter  
Restore the Balance – Western Slope non-profit organization dedicated to reducing political extremism  
Political Science Club  
Associated Student Government  
Cultural Inclusion Council (Student Organization)

CMU Civic Forum  
Social and Behavioral Science Department (especially Eliot Jennings, Associate Professor of Political Science and Assistant Department Head)  
Mesa County Clerk and Recorder's Office  
Montrose County Clerk and Recorder's Office  
CU-Boulder Office of Outreach and Engagement and CU- Law School  
CMU Montrose Campus  
CMU Tech  
Green Wave  
Mesa County Democrat and Republican Parties as well as the Forwardist Party  
Center for Teaching and Learning at CMU  
Office of Academic Affairs  
CMU Library staff  
Alpha Chi – CMU Student Honor Society  
City of Grand Junction  
Foundation for Cultural Exchange  
Club 20 – Non-profit advocacy organization for Western Slope Issues  
Museum of Western Colorado  
CMU Student Chapter of NAMI  
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (US Government)

### Commitment:

This is the first action plan that Colorado Mesa University has developed for ALL IN.

We have scheduled at least one voter engagement activity each week from the start of the semester in August until the election in November and in the weeks after the election as well ending on the week of Thanksgiving. Many weeks have more than one event offered. (See the strategy section for a complete list of events and partners. These events are designed to build civic discourse on campus, to engage the local community in efforts to enhance voter participation and democratic practice including voter information campaigns, capacity building and civic dialogue.

### Landscape:

Colorado Mesa University is a public, 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2024.

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Colorado Mesa University has 9,180 students. 45.4% of students come from the 14-county area CMU is statutorily designated to serve on the western slope of Colorado. 84.8% of students come from Colorado, 14.4% come from out of state and .8% are international students. 43.8% of students are the first in their family to attend college. 97.2% of students are under 25 years of age. 96.8% of students are undergraduate degree seeking students. 65.4% of students identified as white (non-Hispanic), 20.8% identified as Hispanic (of any race). 53.1% of the students identify as female.

The election is November 5th: Presidential, Congressional, Colorado state House and Senate seats, local government seats, and several local and statewide ballot issues are on the ballot. In Colorado voters can register to vote up to the day of the election. Organized voter registration campaigns must end 22 days before the election according to the CO Secretary of State's website.

## Goals:

Our institution's nonpartisan democratic engagement goals are:

Goal 1: To successfully implement the strategy below with all events

Goal 2: To achieve all goals listed above in the executive summary

Goal 3: To participate in larger efforts at voter engagement including joining All-in efforts

## Strategy:

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

Weekly Events starting August 26<sup>th</sup> and continuing through the election:

**Tabling Tuesdays** – Any political organization (Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, Forwardist Party, and even non-profits are allowed to table in the University Center for free to engage the students).

**Voter Registration efforts** – Most Tuesdays starting in the first week in September student organizations (POLS Club, Alpha Chi and CIC) will partner with the League of Women Voters or Mesa County Clerk and Recorder's office to set up voter registration and information tables in the University Center until late October when formal registration campaigns must end by CO state law. Additional Voter Registration booths will be set up at two Home Football games (at the tailgate activities before the game) on September 28th for Parent's Weekend and October 18th for Homecoming. Mesa County Clerk and Recorder's Office was on campus for 5 hours to register and inform voters about the process for National Voter Registration Day on 9/17. A similar event with the Montrose County Clerk and Recorder's office took place at our Montrose Campus.

Individual Events designed to raise voter awareness, address difficult political issues facing voters, and understand the political process surrounding an election and its aftermath:

- 8/11 - Dignity Index and Civil Discourse Presentation to 500+ incoming Freshman
- 9/10 – Presidential Debate Watch Party for students (50+ attended)
- 9/11 – Remembrance Ceremony for 9/11 – CMU Tech campus
- 9/13 – CMU/City of Grand Junction Sister City Celebration (Block Party celebrating 20 years of international relationship with El Espino, El Salvador)
- 9/13 and 9/14 – History Alive Colorado West Chautauqua: Seeking Justice – presentations included Frederick Douglas, Lucy Stone and Cesar Chavez. Each played an important role throughout US History on voting rights. Co-sponsored with Museum of Western Colorado
- 9/17 – Constitution Day Celebration in CMU Plaza

- 9/17 – Green Wave Colorado Tabling in UC
- 9/20 – Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration in CMU Plaza with voter information and registration efforts
- 9/21 – Club 20 Debates – Candidates for all state regional and local offices as well as 2 congressional districts participated in debates at CMU Asteria Theater. Free to students.
- 9/24 - The Realities of Difficult Conversations: Navigating Tough Talks and Topics in the Classroom – Presentation to Faculty at Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) on campus.
- 9/30 - After Chevron: the regulatory landscape for public lands and natural resources – A public presentation in partnership with CU Law School and Office of Outreach and Engagement to celebrate Constitution Day. Law Professor presentation impact of recent Supreme Court reversal of Chevron doctrine as it affects the region.
- 10/1 - Understanding Disinformation: How to Recognize and Mitigate It – presentation to students, faculty and staff at CTL.
- 10/1 - Panel Discussion: The role social media, ideology and college students can play in the campaigns – Streaming from CU Boulder Campus event right before VP Debate watch.
- 10/1 – Vice Presidential Debate Watch Party for students hosted by CMU Civic Forum and POLS Club
- 10/2 – Forum on 2024 Ballot and Ballot Issues at the CMU Montrose Campus – Presentation in partnership with Montrose County Clerk and Recorder’s Office and the League of Women Voters of the Uncompahgre Valley
- 10/8 – Screening of “XCLD: The Story of Cancel Culture” followed by a panel discussion on extremism with filmmaker Ferne Pearlstein. At CMU Asteria Theater.
- 10/9 – Forum and Debates for state and local Ballot Candidates in Montrose – at CMU Montrose Campus
- 10/15 - Using the Dignity Index: A Tool for Facilitating Honest and Respectful Classroom Conversations – Presentation at CTL for Faculty to engage students.
- 10/15 – An Evening with the Governors – Bi-partisan discussion of policy, the state of our election system, and the importance of individuals engaging in civil discourse in their communities with former CO Governors Bill Riter (D) and Bill Owens (R).
- 10/18 – Panel Discussion of Ranked Choice Voting (a CO Ballot initiative) – Co-sponsored with Restore the Balance.
- 10/22 - "I Don't Trust the Media": Sifting for Truth This Election Season Panel Discussion – Presentation by CMU Library Staff and invited guests at the CTL.
- 10/25 – Student Field Trip (open to any student on campus) to the Mesa County Clerk and Recorder’s office to see how ballots are counted, discuss cyber security of voting machines, etc.
- 10/29 - Debating Data: Elections and Evidence – Presentation open to the campus at the CTL
- 10/29 – “make a plan” – Table in UC to encourage students to make a specific plan to vote the following Tuesday or by mail-in. Voter participation information with POLS Club and Mesa County Clerk and Recorder’s Office.
- TBD – Presentation to CMU campus and general public by Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (US Government) on federal efforts to protect the election process from cyber-attack efforts.
- TBD – Post election panel discussion on accepting loss in elections and mental health support for those depressed by the results of the election – Co-hosted with NAMI (student mental health club on campus)

## Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

Tracking student and community participation in various events by number.

Debrief events as a committee and survey students after the election about what events and efforts they participated in and how effective they were.

## Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus Civic Forum page and on ALL IN's website.

The link to the complete list of events (which is accessible by QR codes all over campus and in local papers) is: <https://www.coloradomesa.edu/civic-forum/engagement/mav-the-vote.html>

Other parts of the Civic Forum page show events planned in the past for civic engagement as well as our philosophy about civic discourse, engagement and free speech on campus. Many of the events on the Mav the Vote page are also advertised on the websites of our partner organizations and in flyers and local media advertising.