

2024/2025 Colorado Mountain College

All In Democracy Challenge Action Plan

Summary

Colorado Mountain College is committed to fostering student civic engagement, civic learning and democratic engagement by working across our various campuses to create and institutionalize an integrated, concerted push for student voter registration, election participation and civil discussion & dialogue. Our unique institutional makeup of 11 separate mountain campuses means that CMC faces different challenges compared to other 2-year institutions when working to bridge access to our democracy.

Colorado Mountain College is officially Colorado's first dual mission institution. This means we offer a mix of certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. Colorado Mountain College is also a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). We have 11 separate campuses that cover 7500 square miles. In 2020 CMC had a 69.9% voting rate. The majority of our campuses are commuter campuses, while three of them are residential.

Mountain communities are unique places that our campus communities take pride in – our students have a wide range of opportunities to innovate, connect to our rich environments, and work to build sustainable futures. Mountain communities also face more barriers to accessing voter registration and Voter Service Centers as compared to suburban and urban communities, due to geography and smaller pockets of population density. Mountain communities are also reached less by organizations and groups providing voter registration services. Additionally, many of our programs span STEM fields, and engaging STEM students in democracy presents its own set of challenges. Research shows that STEM fields have lower voting rates historically. Lastly, young people, and specifically young people of color, are underrepresented in the electorate due to specific systemic barriers; as a designated Hispanic-serving institution, we are committed to understanding and addressing these barriers.

As we work to create a cross-campus integrated institutional effort to increase student participation and bridge these gaps, our intention is to work to build and sustain programs and initiatives that work for all our campus communities, bringing professionals from each campus to the table and holding ourselves accountable to building up this important work together.

Efforts were primarily being driven by staff at our Spring Valley Campus in 2020 and 2022, however we are now more engaged than ever in collaborative efforts across all CMC campuses. We plan to continue this work as it is officially part of our Institutional Learning Outcomes.

This plan is an overview of how we will approach civic engagement in 2024/2025.

Our current leadership team

Jen Brennan, College Counselor, Student Affairs, Spring Valley Campus, Co-advisor to The Red, White and Blue Student Club at Spring Valley.

Andrea Caruso, College Counselor, Student Affairs, Spring Valley Campus, makes sure Civic Engagement is part of all orientations for new students at Spring Valley.

Susan Proper, Community Member Summit County, Election Lawyer, Breckenridge
Brian Barker, Marketing Director, Central Services

Becky Musselman, Adjunct Faculty Political Science, Spring Valley, Co-advisor to The Red, White and Blue Student Club at Spring Valley

Janelle Cook, Director of Financial Aid, Central Services

Arielle Mizrahi, Unify America. Partner with CMC for the Unify America College Bowl

Jon Shaw, Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, Aspen/Carbondale
(point of contact for voter registration tables Aspen and Carbondale)

Student Group- Red, White and Blue Club Spring Valley Civic Engagement Club

Jane Szucs, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Spring Valley Campus
(Chair of the common reader program)

Matt Gianneschi, Vice President of CMC and President of CMC beginning July 1, 2024

Shane Larson, Vice President of Student Affairs, Central Services

Point of Contact

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Commitments

Presidents' Commitment

Dr. Hauser, our current President of CMC, has signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation. We will have a new president beginning July, 1st 2024, he may need to re-sign the commitment?

Colorado Mountain College is a continued participant in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge (since 2020).

We are part of the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)- signed up again for 2024. Eagerly waiting for the 2022 NSLVE data to see where to target and improve.

Common Reader Program

Colorado Mountain College has had a common reader program for 18 years. We choose a book, and all read it together in an academic year. Faculty weave the common reader into their classes, there are contests, we give away books to students and the community and we invite the author to come in person to Colorado for talks with students and the community. This year we have launched our common reader program early (fall 2023) because we have chosen the book, *The Bill of Obligations* by Richard Haass. This book will take us through fall 2024 and the election season. The college did a video launch with Richard Haass, Walter Isaacson and Mary Lousie Kelly from NPR in Fall 2023. We have held five community events called Rediscovering Common Ground based on the book and bringing our communities together. These events were held in Salida, Rifle, Glenwood Springs, Breckenridge and Edwards. And in October Richard Haas will be coming to Colorado and talking with students, staff, faculty and communities about his book and what it means to widen our thinking about what it takes to live in and uphold a democracy. Hint- it's not just about rights, it's also about our obligations to each other and our system of government.

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs)

When students graduate from CMC, we expect them to have mastered Knowledge, Involvement, and Application. The education they receive here equips them with the skills, confidence, and abilities to thrive out there.

Knowledge – Students learn the skills needed for personal, creative, and professional endeavors.

Involvement – Students will support their communities' social, economic, and environmental well-being.

Application – Students will solve complex problems through cooperation and creativity.

Under **Involvement** CMC has a commitment to our Institutional Learning Outcome of

Civic Knowledge and Engagement—Local and Global.

"Working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes" (Ed. Ehrlich, 2000). In addition, civic engagement encompasses actions wherein individuals participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community.

- Promote diversity of communities and cultures
- Connect and extend civic knowledge
- Relate civic identity to civic values and commitment
- Utilize civic communication
- Lead civic action and reflection
- Collaborate across civic context/structures

<https://coloradomtn.edu/academics/islo/?ss360SearchTerm=learning%20outcomes>

Student Civic Engagement Club

The Red, White and Blue Club, a non-partisan civic engagement student club, began in Fall of 2022 at the Spring Valley campus. The goal of the club is to create awareness to end political apathy. And to come together to have civil dialogue with those you may not agree with. We have formed partnerships, met our state representatives and legislators, visited the state capitol and have held events on campus.

Our state representatives are scheduled to visit (again) in August to the Club Fair at Spring Valley.

Partnerships

Foster Partnerships to help with this work in the communities we serve, as well as regionally and nationally.

Unify America- partner since Aug. 2023. Throughout the CMC district in both Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 we had students participating in the Unify America Challenge Bowl. Students participated as part of a class (English, American Government, Communications) or as part of a Club (Red, White and Blue Club, Student Government).

POW- Protect our Winters. POW helps passionate outdoor people protect the places and experiences they love from climate change. POW started in 2007 and their **theory of change** hinges on the belief that the outdoor community can have a disproportionate impact by driving civic participation at those thin margins. By focusing our efforts in critical geographies and creating local activations, we believe that we can educate, register and turn out enough voters to shift our nation's response to the climate crisis. To solve the climate crisis, the world needs our community. It's the sum of our small efforts—where we turn our passion into purpose—and deliver climate victories where they're needed most.

CMC has partnered with POW to put on one of four Stoke the Vote events in Fall 2024. The event will be held at CMC Spring Valley on Oct. 3rd. There will be professional athletes, short movies, voter registration and getting stoked to vote!

Campus Compact- have emailed them and asked to join the organization April 2024. Waiting for response on how to join.

Community Partners- voter registration and education at most campuses. Volunteers who help educate our students on voting rules, timelines and what is on the ballot.

Landscape

Understanding students, barriers, and our community.

We will continue to work towards understanding what students think about our system of government and how to address any voter apathy while we encourage participation which starts with voting.

We are in the process to expand CMC's NSLVE permissions to include more demographic data. This will help next election cycle know where we need to focus our efforts in a more targeted way.

Colorado's voting process is very friendly to voters. We have mail in balloting and an easy process for registering to vote. I think our greatest hurdle is educating students on either changing their address to the school address if they live on campus or making sure they get their ballot from their parent's house if they live in Colorado. If they change their address to the school address they just need to remember to change it if/when they move. Our students often only live on-campus for one year. If they choose to have their ballot mailed to their parent's home they have to make a plan to get that ballot. Lots of education needs to take place here. We do a lot of this at the Spring Valley Campus. I think some work could take place at our other campuses that have Residence Halls or student housing. Also, if students live out-of-state we need to continue educating them on the choice to vote in their home state or in Colorado if they live on-campus.

Engaging undocumented students and international students. When we speak about Civic Engagement at Orientation we always address undocumented students by encouraging them to talk to their friends and family about the importance of voting. We let them know that they can help too. Some of our international students are our most engaged students in our Student Clubs (Red, White and Blue and Student Government).

Goals, strategies and tactics

Goal: Foster 2024 student voter registration

Strategies and tactics:

- Internal resource page for students containing student-friendly and accurate voter registration information and a link to the CO Secretary of State's online voter registration portal.
- Outward facing website will communicate the Presidential Commitment and link to CO Secretary of State's online voter registration portal
- Financial Aid office sends Bi-annual emails to students encouraging them to register to vote, and informing them of the recent March 2022 implementation of full online voter registration access regardless of Colorado ID status (passed in the 2021 Colorado Votes Act)
- Work study position dedicated to GOTV efforts Fall 2024- Spring Valley Campus Baylee Pearson. Will be speaking to a college-wide group about this and encouraging others to have a work study position at their campus.
- In-person voter registration and voter education efforts at CMC campuses
- POW- Protect our Winters event (details above)
- Pledge to Vote- use All in Toolkit
- Encourage the College to hire a Civic Engagement Coordinator for the whole college
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- Engage community partners, including Unify America and community partners, in voter registration efforts on our residential campuses (Spring Valley, Leadville and Steamboat)
- Conduct a big voter registration push for National Voter Registration Day (Sept. 17, 2024)
- Execute events such as film screenings, debates, lecture series, etc (work study position to work on this)
- Incorporate voter registration and education into virtual events
- Engage teaching faculty to integrate online voter registration in their classrooms
- Integrate voter registration into Spring Valley campus in-person orientation (August 16th) to reach ~150 students by hosting a session on civic engagement that includes online voter registration. Emphasize the rights of students who moved from out-of-state to register and vote in CO
- Spring Valley classroom visits to share voter data to first semester students in How to be Successful in College Workshop. Info on upcoming election, how to register, dates, how to vote, understanding ballot
- Engage student life at our 3 residential campuses in voter registration (clubs, RAs, student government association)
 - Partner with New Era Colorado to host a Zoom call prior to National Voter Registration Day with a variety of student leaders to get them trained on engaging peers in online voter registration and tabling

Goal: Foster 2024 student voter turnout by ensuring as many students as possible receive their ballots in the mail and are able to cast them, and work with students who didn't receive a ballot in the mail to vote in-person

Strategies and tactics:

- Once ballots begin getting mailed out (mid October), email blast all students with accurate, student friendly voting information, including how to vote by mail, how to locate your nearest Voter Service Center or ballot dropbox, and other important FAQs
 - Emphasize the ability to register/ update voter registration online by Mon. Oct. 31 and still receive a ballot in the mail
 - Emphasize the rights of students who moved from out-of-state to register and vote in CO
- Leverage social media to continue our "Why I Am Voting" campaign, including a promo video; post a pro-voting statement from admin on website
- In-person voter turnout efforts
 - Tabling; engage community members as volunteers to collect and deliver 10 ballots per person to address access, in line with applicable CO election laws
 - Shuttle for in-person voting on Nov. 7th. From Spring Valley
- TBD: Host virtual ballot parties and/or engage student leaders in hosting ballot parties

Goal: Work to build and institutionalize a permanent cross-campus collaborative effort to foster student civic engagement

Strategies and tactics:

Common Reader program- (college-wide)
The Bill of Obligations- Richard Haass

Students, staff, faculty and community read book together
Author visits in October 2024

Holding Community Events to Rediscover Common Ground spring and summer 2024
Bring communities together based on the common reader and the obligations. Five events held spring 2024. More events in summer 2024, likely partnered with the Aspen Institute.

Unify America College Bowl - CMC has partnered with Unify America for a year. 5 professors/staff have had 44 students participate in the College Bowl. This past Spring, Unify America and CMC partnered to make in-person and virtual presentations to 90+ faculty across all 11 CMC campuses to publicize the Common Reader and the College Bowl collaboration. We expect that 100-200 students will participate in the Fall 2024 College Bowl. Following the Fall, we will continue to grow this partnership and participation in College Bowls to provide students with civil discourse opportunities.

- Leadership team leverages Spring Valley programming to set an example for other campuses - hosting meetings to engage other campuses in our model, best practices, and next steps to integrate these initiatives into their campuses
 - Engage CMC President in bringing campuses to the table
- Use 2022 NSLVE data to build a basis for understanding CMC student voter registration and turnout in non-presidential major election years
- Improve our demographic collection to assist our data analysis of how student demographics intersect with voter registration and election access
 - Authorize NSLVE to use our demographic data
 - Engage individual campuses on systematizing the collection of this information
- Engage student life (clubs, RAs, student gov't association) to build student civic engagement leadership
- Long term goal- have a Civics requirement as part of all degrees at CMC. In-coming President is open to this idea.

Reporting- I am presenting this plan and going over it with a college-wide group in June. I would like to push for a college-wide Civic Engagement Coordinator that would be located at our Central Services and coordinate with all campuses. As soon as the NSLVE data comes in it will be put on the website. The website links need work. I hope someone can take this work on to improve it so more people can see the data and resources. I think one of our challenges is the lack of the college-wide understanding of what All in Democracy Challenge is. I think some people just think Spring Valley is part of the Challenge and not the whole college. I will work to change perceptions and help others understand it more. Again, a college-wide coordinator could really help with this.

Evaluation- Continue to have others look at this Action Plan and give feedback. Look at NSLVE data and make more targeted goals.

