



**CAMPUS
DEMOCRACY
CHALLENGE**

Columbia College Chicago 2022 Democratic Engagement Action Plan
Developed by: Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin

Executive Summary:

Columbia Votes is now an in-person, ask-every-student feature in most sections of "Big Chicago," a first-year course. In Fall 2022, Sharon and a group of voter registration geniuses (trained student workers) will visit these classes to provide 50-state voter registration, motivation and education, and assist students who wish to vote back home with requesting VBM ballots. We do this through a peer-to-peer presentation followed by assistance filling out the NVRA form, photocopying IDs, and providing properly addressed envelopes and stamps. This year, we also plan to collect contact information so that we can follow up with reminders.

In addition, there is a Columbia Votes link in every Canvas (LMS) page for every course on campus. This link takes students to our intranet site containing a video version of the in-class presentation and links for registering and requesting vote-by-mail ballots. In addition, Columbia Votes will be staffing a table in the Student Center, and monitoring an email help line (vote@colum.edu). Voter registration geniuses are available to help students by phone, text, email or Zoom if they encounter any obstacles, including the need for photocopies, envelopes and stamps.

We have VR events planned in the dorms, during intermissions in student theater productions, and at college events with partner student organizations. We also have an active Instagram account [@Columbia_Votes](https://www.instagram.com/Columbia_Votes). Columbia Votes is appreciated by most faculty and promoted by the registrar. It is even mentioned in the college's Strategic Plan as a key feature of the college's commitment to civic engagement.

We will concentrate our efforts on the first 6 weeks of the semester because of the midterms. Our goal is to maximize the student vote in 2022 by through the Ask Every Student model of in-person engagement of as many students as possible, but with the special emphasis on first-year students. We set a high bar for ourselves in 2020, raising our campus voting rate to 71.8% from 56% in 2016--a 15.8% increase.

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes:

Sharon Bloyd-Peshkin, the creator of Columbia Votes. Sharon is a professor of journalism in the Communication Department. The leadership team includes the college president's chief of staff, Laurent Pernot, who approves expenses (other than grant money from Students Learn Students Vote), and four student work aides (voter registration geniuses). The 2022 VRGs are Anna Busalacchi and Carolina Ayala (senior VRGs), and Ethan Alonzo and Ricky Luoto (junior VRGs). We work closely with and value support from SLSV and the HE-SVE.

Commitment:

Our campus has signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

Our campus uses the following methods to communicate with students about the election:

- Class visits to every in-person section of Big Chicago, a required first-year course
- A table at the Student Center.
- Events at the dorms and at the library, and pop-ups during intermissions at on-campus theater intermissions.
- Canvas (our learning management system), Instagram and partnering with other student organizations.

Landscape:

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Total enrollment in Fall 2021 was 6,493 undergraduate and 243 graduate students. Undergraduates are 47% white non-Hispanic, 15% Black non-Hispanic, 24% Hispanic, 4% Asian, 5% multi-racial.

Our domestic students come from 49 states. Of the 1,696 freshmen enrolled in Fall 2021, the top ten states of origin are Illinois (895), Indiana (77), Michigan (72), Minnesota (66), Ohio (63), Wisconsin (59), California (52), Missouri (44), Texas (41) and Massachusetts (21).

According to NSLVE campus voting data, 56.4% of eligible students voted in 2016, 42.2% of eligible students voted in 2018, and 71.8% of eligible students voted in 2020. Among eligible voters, 82.6% registered in 2016, 81.5% registered in 2018, and 87.7% registered in 2020. And of registered voters, 67.8% voted in 2016, 51.5% voted in 2018, and 81.9% voted in 2020.



Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals are to encourage and enable every student who is eligible and interested to register to vote and to request a vote-by-mail ballot on campus or back home, as well as to obtain non-partisan information on all candidates on their ballot.

Strategy:

We are implementing the following strategies in Fall 2022:

- Classroom voter registration presentations in Big Chicago classes
- Tabling the Student Center
- Participation in the library's National Voter Registration Day programming
- Voter registration tables at scheduled dorm events and pop-up theater intermissions
- Instagram campaign
- Partnerships with student organizations
- Outreach from academic affairs to faculty and from the registrar to students

NSLVE:

Columbia College Chicago has authorized NSLVE.

Evaluation:

In addition to our NSLVE data, we plan to keep track of the number of students we reach and the number we help register to vote.

Reporting:

We will report our campus action plan and NSLVE reports in the following ways:

- Our action plan is posted on the campus intranet and is available for anyone at the institution to view.
- Our campus NSLVE reports will be posted on our campus website and shared with the campus community.