



**ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE
VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS DESIGNATION
CIVIC ACTION PLAN 2024**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan was developed by Inver Hills Community College's civic engagement coalition. The following individuals contributed to the development of this action plan:

Staff:

- Shannon Williams, Community-Based Learning Coordinator (CBL) (co-facilitator)
- Kimberly Swinney, Director of Student Life
- Rachel Marzahn, Interactive Media Coordinator
- Jennifer Parker, TRIO Academic Advisor

Faculty:

- Amy Zsohar, Communications
- Sadie Pendaz-Foster, Sociology
- Zack Sullivan, Political Science
- Erica Wood, Geology

Students:

- Debbie Wallen, Student Senate President and CBL Assistant for Civic Engagement (co-facilitator)
- Sarah Meeker, CBL Assistant for Civic Engagement
- Megan Anderson, Student

This action plan was developed for Inver Hills Community College in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota. It was developed to serve all students, including online, in-person, and hybrid students, and reach across our college's diverse student demographics.

In order to make this plan as equitable as possible, all students, faculty, staff and administrators were invited to participate. Members of the administration and students expressed interest who could not make it to coalition meetings. These stakeholders were surveyed for their ideas throughout the action planning process and consulted on work done within the coalition:

- College President Michael Berndt
- Student Senate
- A survey was sent to all student clubs
- Vice President of Diversity Equity Inclusion Justice and Belonging

This action plan begins immediately and tactics identified as part of the planning process are already being implemented (e.g. faculty developed a syllabus statement on voting that was sent to all faculty before the end of the spring semester). The purpose of this plan is to guide our work to achieve our goals of closing student voting rate gaps and strengthening *Ask Every Student* strategies, such as increased faculty engagement and student leadership. It will also support our coalition in working towards our long-term goals related to institutionalizing civic engagement.

The IHCC Community-Based Learning Coordinator and CBL Assistants, based in the Center for Career Development and Community-Based Learning, will facilitate the coalition and action plan execution.

LEADERSHIP

Inver Hills Community College has many members of our community who are passionate about nonpartisan civic and democratic engagement. In past years, there were stakeholders in the coalition from all divisions on campus. As our college has faced significant budget struggles, we have lost a lot of staff and capacity has become very limited. We adjusted for this by intentionally meeting one-on-one with administrators and attending student club and student senate meetings to get additional student input.

Support from national and local partners have been instrumental in our success. We participate in and use resources from Ask Every Student, Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, and civic holiday organizations to guide the overall strategy. IHCC is a member of Minnesota & Iowa Campus Compact (now known as Seed Coalition) and have benefited from receiving grants to have Campus Election Engagement Project fellows as a benefit of Campus Compact membership. LeadMN, the statewide student association for Minnesota community and technical colleges, is a close partner that provides training for students on non-partisan voter engagement and professional development for students and advisors.

Our coalition has a variety of strengths that are highlighted throughout our action plan. Faculty will create resources and do outreach to their peers on how to integrate voting into the curriculum. Equity and Inclusion is partnering with the coalition on programming and outreach. Staff represent all of the main venues where we connect with students outside the classroom – from clubs to orientation to college social media to academic advising. Our Student Senate leaders represent a cross-section of academic programs and membership in other student clubs, and are the direct connection to our community partner, LeadMN.

While our coalition is off to a strong start, there are people missing from the table. The racial identities of our coalition members do not reflect our student body. We do not have students involved who are not formally involved in Student Senate. And, while we are partnered with national and local organizations, those relationships have been primarily based in resource access and we are lacking community voice in the work of the campus coalition. Our action plan includes strategies to broaden representation in our coalition.

Over the past year, the Community-Based Learning Coordinator met with local election officials of the five surrounding cities where we draw the most students from and asked how to best partner. Each one expressed interest in having help to recruit election workers. Our voting coalition would also like to use the SLSV toolkit on how to partner with election officials and put those recommendations into practice early this summer.

A strength of our community college is the investment into staff who make civic engagement a priority in their work plan. The CBL Coordinator is a permanent staff position that has civic engagement in the position description, and so when staff turns over, there will be someone new hired. There are secondary contacts/leaders in both academic and student affairs who can carry the work of the coalition forward and carry out the civic action plan.

COMMITMENT

Community engagement is woven into the stated vision and values of Inver Hills Community College, which can be found at <https://www.inverhills.edu/about/>. The campus coalition has support from the college leadership cabinet including college president, Michael Berndt, who joined the ALL IN Presidents Council and has always been a strong advocate for civic engagement. Most recently, he had time on the agenda of the leadership council of all Minnesota State Colleges and Universities presidents to speak to the benefit of our campuses making a deeper commitment to civic engagement and also shared his perspective at a community colleges town hall co-sponsored by ALL IN, SLSV, and the partners who are sponsoring the community college concert contest.

Despite strong support from campus leadership, there is a lot of opportunity to institutionalize civic learning and democratic engagement. It is included in curriculum on an instructor-by-instructor basis but there are not institution-wide learning outcomes or processes for measuring outcomes for courses that do include civic learning. Our accrediting body, the Higher Learning Commission, has added civic learning to its list of assessment criteria and we are in the beginning stages of discussing how that will look on our campus.

The passion and commitment from individuals and departments throughout campus do make a difference in reaching students and laying the foundation of our campus culture around civic engagement. Our college Marketing department is very supportive of including voter registration and voting information on the college web site and social media channels. Voter registration information is posted as an announcement in D2L, our learning management software that every student accesses, and official college email is sent to every student with specific voting information each semester. Student Life and Student Senate lead co-curricular programming and include voter information at their events. Community-Based Learning, in partnership with Student Senate, plans events and educational outreach for all the civic holidays and hires federal work study students to assist with civic engagement all year round.

The institution's commitment to funding a staff position that is responsible for civic engagement is a primary way to ensure that there is continuity with these efforts regardless of who is in the position. To the best of our knowledge, Inver Hills is the only community and technical college in the Minnesota State system that funds such a position. Our coalition's long-term goals will center

around additional ways to institutionalize civic engagement so that it becomes part of the campus culture and not just the commitment and passion of the individuals involved.

LANDSCAPE

Inver Hills Community College is located in the south metro area of the Twin Cities, Minnesota.

In fall semester 2023, there were 3,127 students enrolled taking courses for credit. This is the equivalent of 975 full-time students.

- 50% were returning students
- 50% were continuing students
- 37% were Students of Color (SOC)
- 27% were over the age of 25
- 24% were age 17 and under
- 19% came from a home where neither parent had any college
- 49% came from a home where neither parent had a bachelor's degree
- 30% were known to be Pell Grant eligible

Inver Hills is suffering from steadily declining enrollment and budget. This has created a landscape where there is not funding for civic engagement efforts aside from the Community-Based Learning staff position. Declining enrollment also impacts Student Life and co-curricular programming as those budgets are based on a per-credit student fee.

Inver Hills is a commuter campus and serves students from all across Dakota County and the Twin Cities metro area. As a result, it is challenging to engage students in co-curricular activities and offer events/programs such as candidate forums and sample ballot education since students reside in so many different communities. As a result, we previously focused on resources from the Minnesota Secretary of State website where students can look up their polling location, sample ballot, etc. In 2024, we plan to provide more specific resources and hold events for students to learn what's on their ballot because we haven't felt like what we've previously done is enough.

Despite these challenges, Inver Hills Community College was recognized by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge as the community college with the highest student voting rate for the 2020 election (71.8%). We overcome our challenges by applying for grants and funding opportunities, utilizing work study funds to hire student civic engagement employees, integrate education and programming into classes and other spaces that are key to the community college experience, and take advantage of all student communication methods available.

Minnesota is also a national leader in voting access and voting rates, and that culture has a positive impact on our campus efforts.

The primary assessment tool we used for this civic action plan is the NSLVE. The coalition reviewed our 2020 NSLVE data to set our goals and strategies for 2024. Inver Hills conducted the Student Satisfaction Inventory in spring 2024 and included a customized question about civic engagement participation. Those results will not be available until fall.

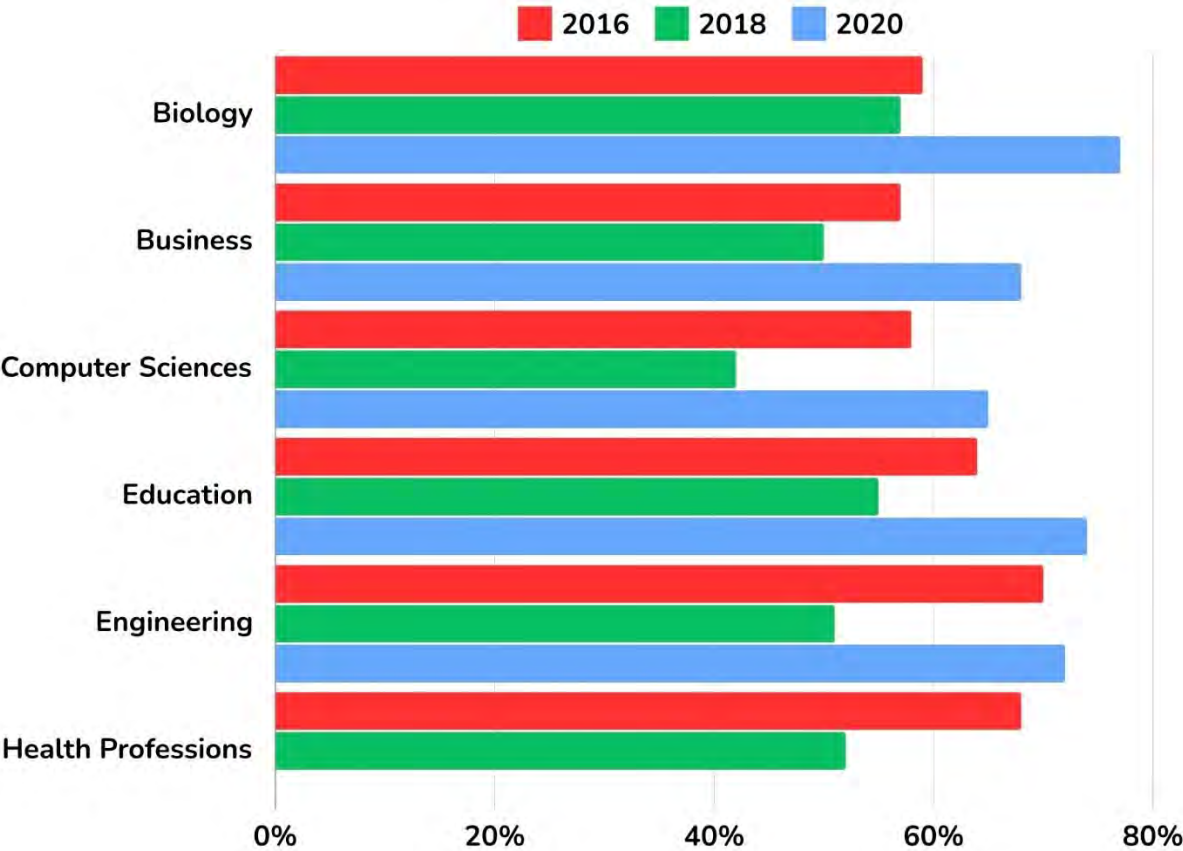
NSLVE

Like most institutions, Inver Hills Community College saw gains in almost all metrics for the 2020 election. IHCC had a positive change of 8.7% from the 2016 election.

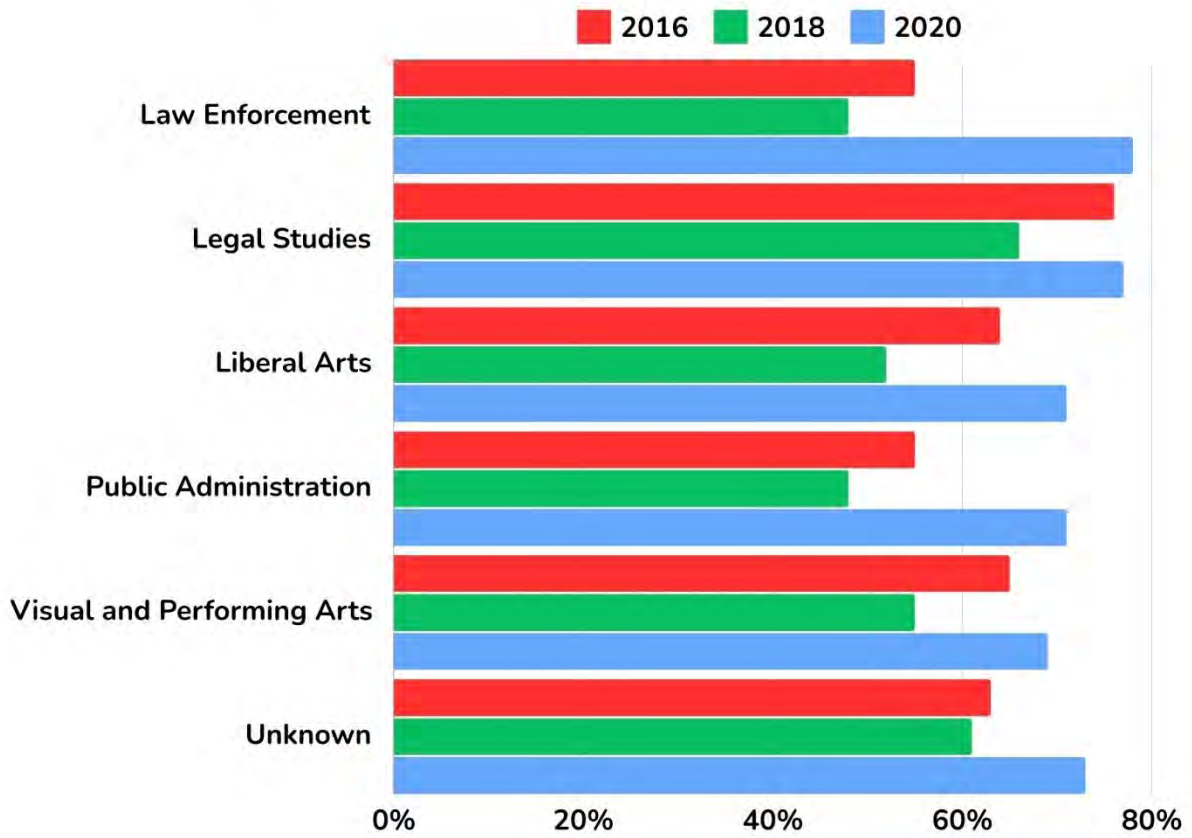
For our 2024 civic action plan, we are focusing on the 2020 NSLVE data and basing our goals on increasing those percentages, since historically folks do not participate in midterms at the same rate as presidential election years. Our coalition set a goal to close voting rate gaps by 5% based on field of study, age range, and race/ethnicity.

Sarah Meeker, a CBL Assistant for Civic Engagement, created these demographic graphs based on our NSLVE data:

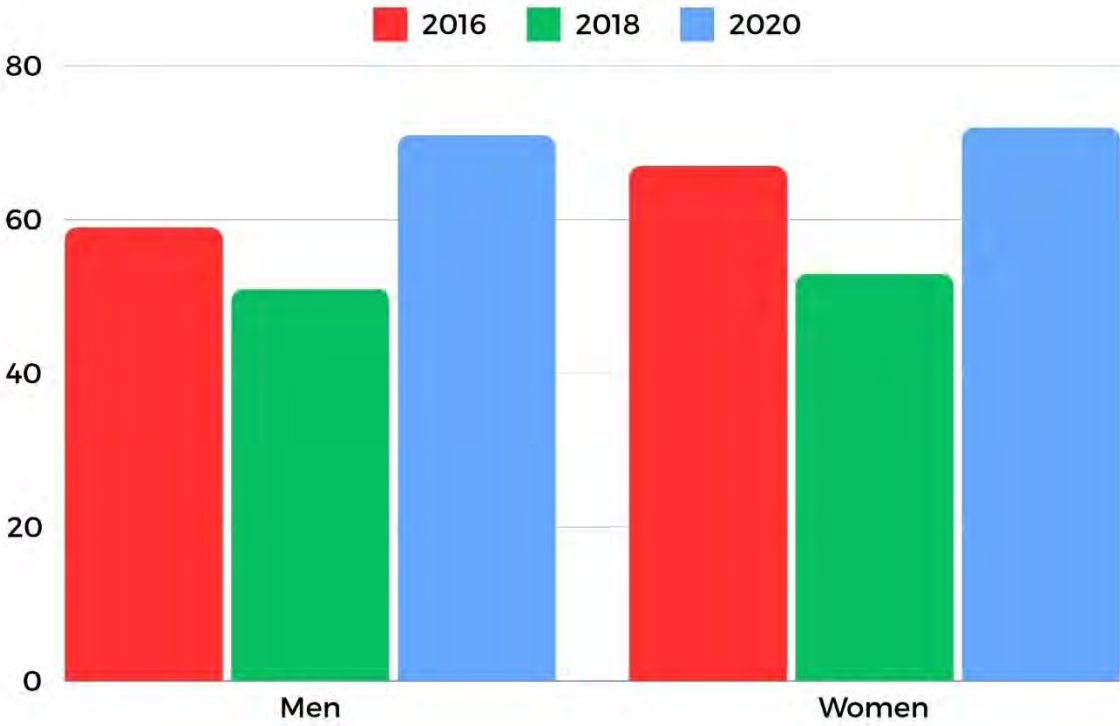
By Field of Study, Part 1



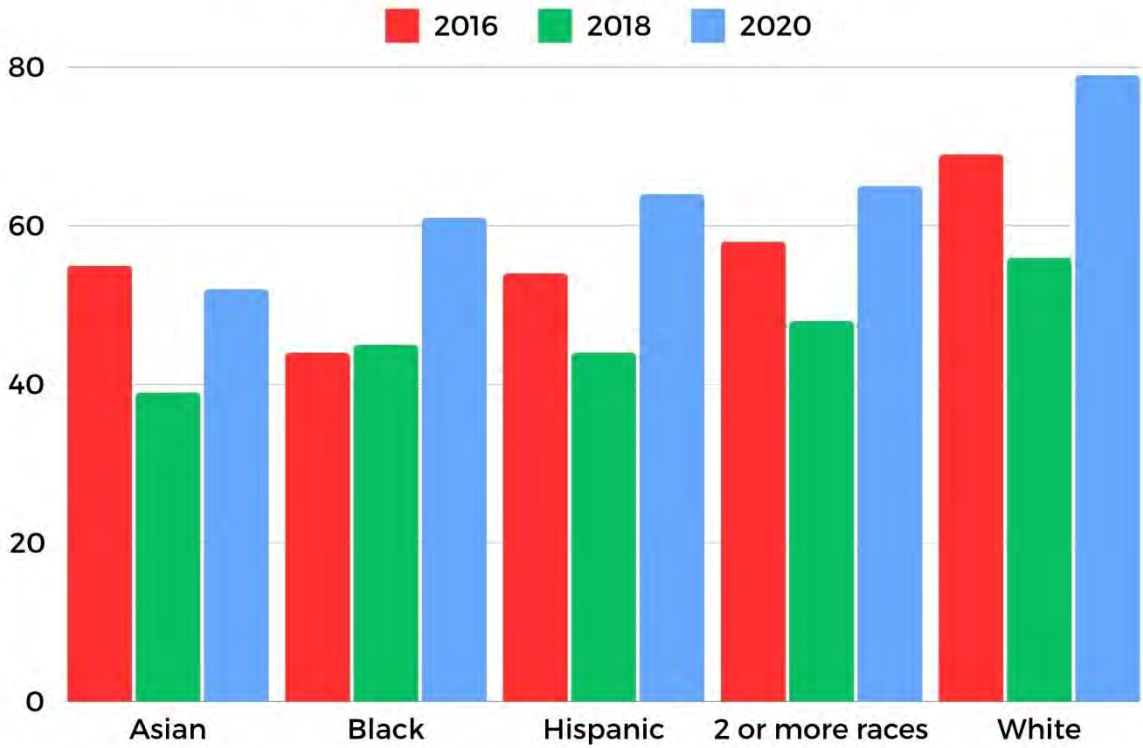
By Field of Study, Part 2



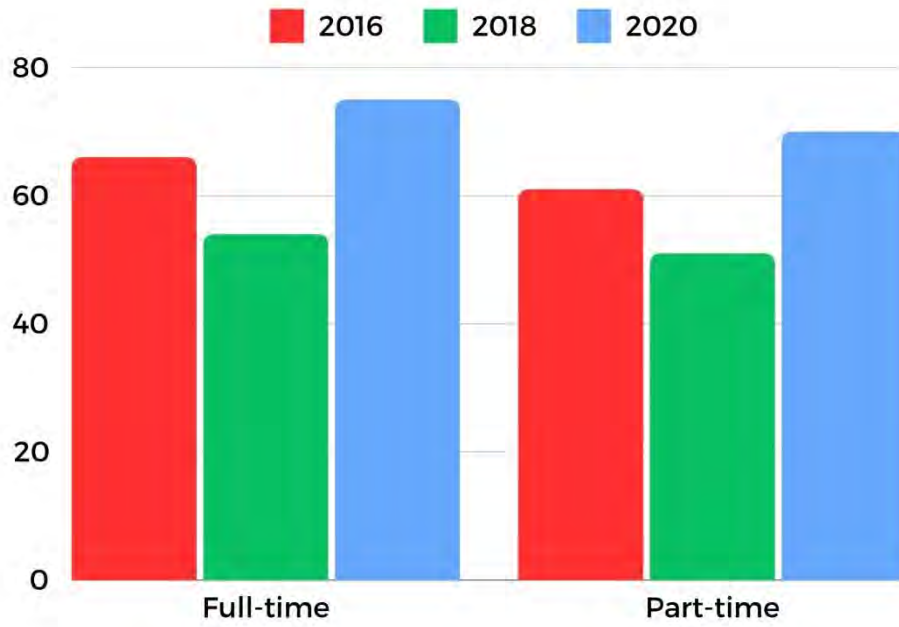
BY GENDER



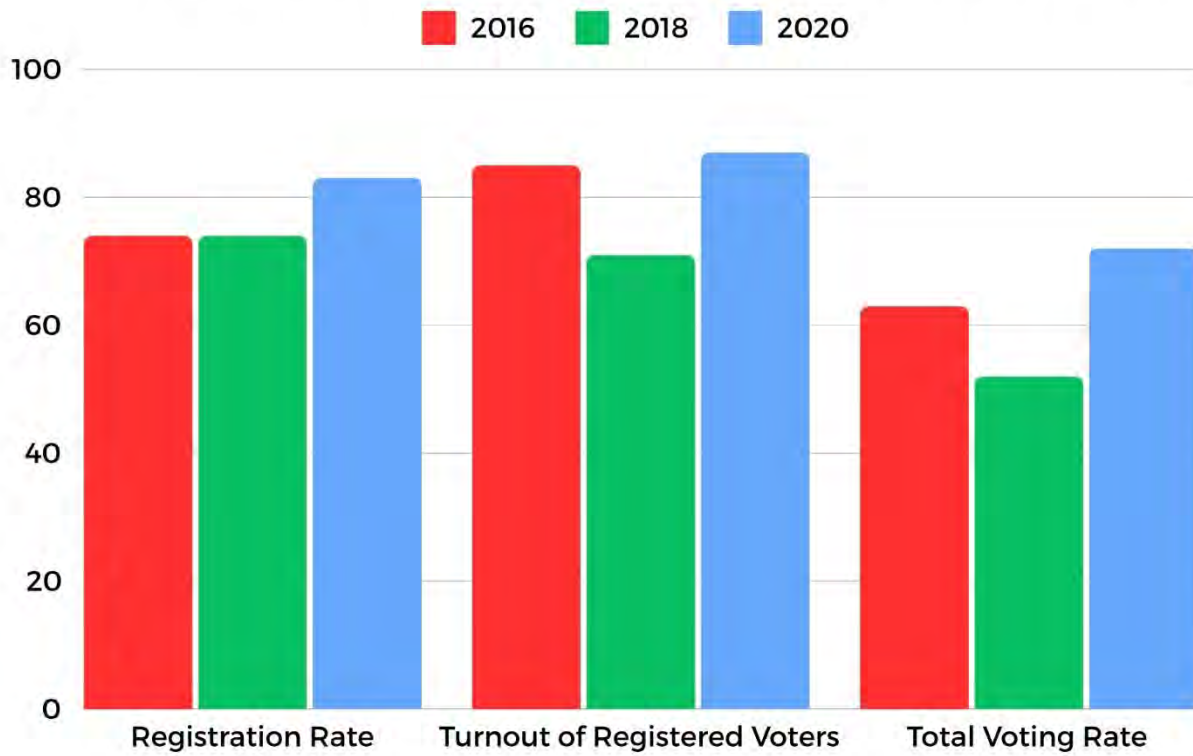
BY RACE/ETHNICITY



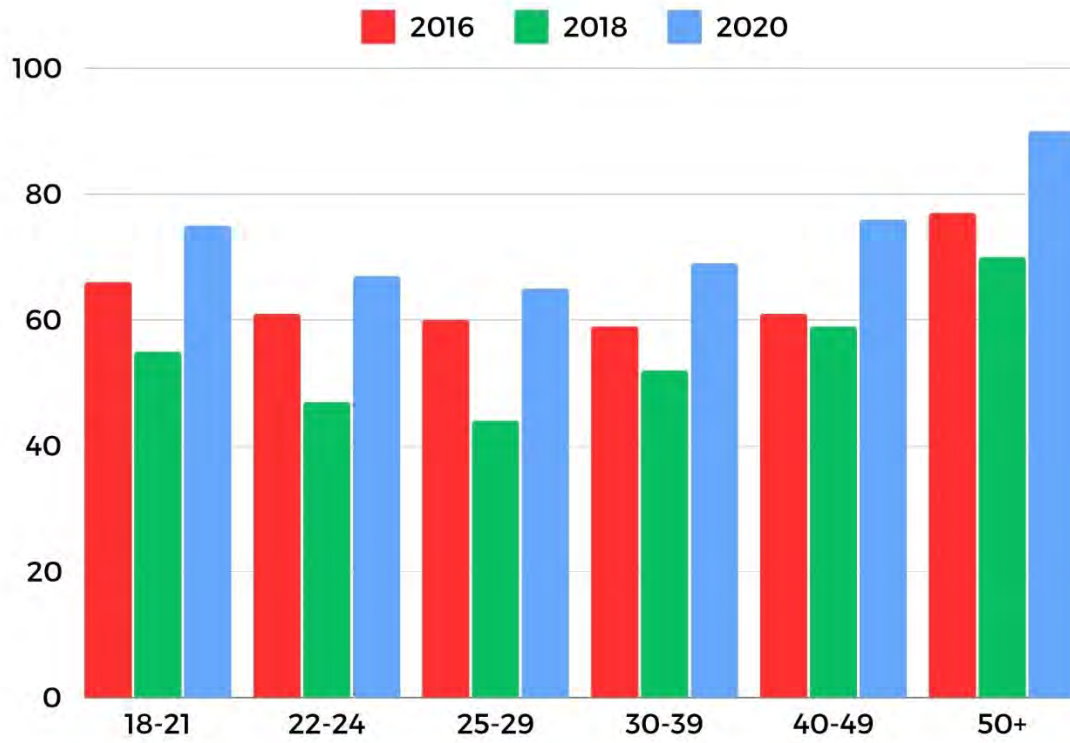
ENROLLMENT STATUS



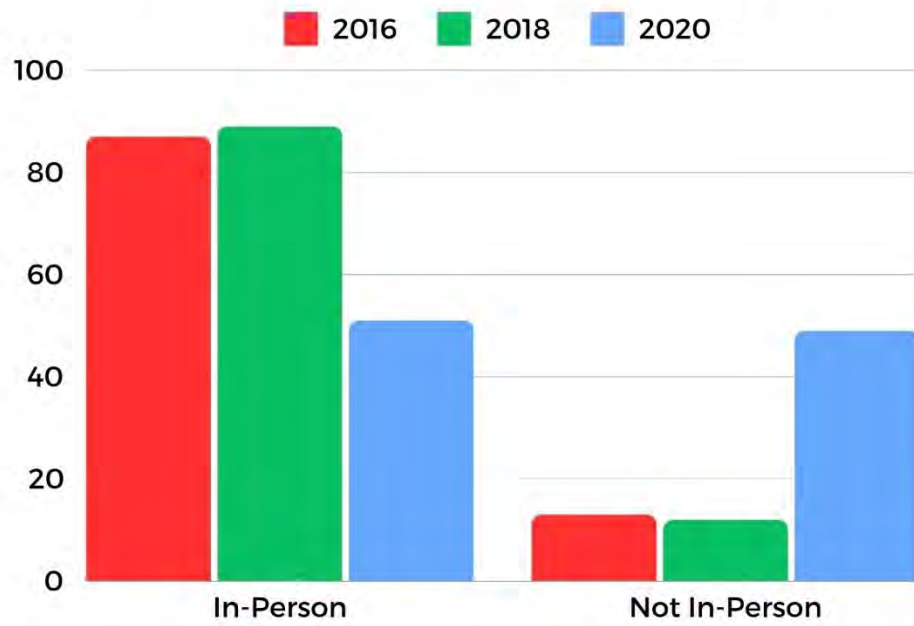
REGISTRATION & VOTING RATES



BY AGE GROUP



VOTING METHOD



GOALS

Our coalition set three goals for the 2024 election cycle:

1. Form a partnership with three city/local election officials to help with their efforts to recruit election judges.
2. Define and evaluate the quality and quantity of faculty engagement with the goal of increasing future engagement.
3. Close student voting rates by 5% over 2020 rates with the following demographics as identified through our NSLVE data:
 - a. Age ranges of 22-24 and 25-29.
 - b. Students who identify as Black, Asian and Hispanic.
 - c. Degree areas of Computer Science, Visual and Performing Arts, and Business.

The coalition set two long-term goals to work on over the next 2-3 election cycles:

1. Make our campus an early voting site.
2. Build Election Day into the academic calendar.

We evaluated our goals to fit the S.M.A.R.T.I.E. framework.

Short-Term Goal 1: Form a partnership with three city/local election officials to help with their efforts to recruit election judges.

S- IHCC's civic action voting coalition will partner with three city/local election officials to recruit election workers.

M- By contacting local election officials over the summer 2024, to be ask them to table on campus to help recruit election workers and keep track how many do sign up to be an election worker.

A- Our CBL Coordinator, CBL Assistants and voter ambassadors will help contact and work with the local election officials to help table to recruit election workers from our student body.

R- - Its relevancy is to help our student body have more involvement in civic engagement, and one way to do that is by becoming an election worker, to learn how that process goes, help advocate other students to vote, and looks amazing on their resume.

T- Timeline is to start in the over Summer 2024 and working with the city/local election officials to table to recruit election workers, during the fall semester.

I- Looking at contacting identity-based clubs, like LGBT+ club, Black Student Union, Muslim Student Association, etc. In contacting those clubs that demographically at our college, have gaps on connecting with about civic engagement/voting, and it would help to be inclusive by bringing our voter ambassadors and/or local election officials, the importance of voting and being an election worker.

E- By contacting identity-based clubs, and students in those clubs, and helping them tell their friends who may/may not be in a similar demographic group, will help make this goal more equitable, in making sure that everyone, and not just people who don't have a gap in voter engagement, to be able to learn about civic engagement and being an election worker.

Short-Term Goal 2: Define and evaluate the quality and quantity of faculty engagement with the goal of increasing future engagement.

S- Define and evaluate the quality and quantity of faculty engagement with the goal of increasing future engagement by having faculty have civic engagement/voting information in their syllabus, emails, D2L, etc. To make sure all students are receiving this information, and if faculty were to be more engaged.

M- Contacting and keeping track of how many faculty are engaging with their students with information about civic engagement/voting information, how many faculty participate in the champion incentive program and earn a stipend.

A- Right now, only a small population of faculty promote civic engagement/voting information to their students and it hasn't been formally tracked. Determining a baseline of faculty engagement is within our reach; it just needs to be formally tracked.

R- This goal is reachable, in the short-term, by creating ways to help faculty to promote this information to their students easily.

T- During summer 2024, we will create templates for emails, D2L, and the syllabus template to share with faculty to copy and paste, making it easy for them, but also giving the chance for the students to receive this information before election day.

I- By getting other faculty members, who do not necessarily teach about voting, giving them an option to easily give voting information to their students, and will close that gap, like classes like political science, where that is implanted in the course.

E- By wanting faculty to want to send out civic engagement/voting information, to their students, will help close the gap that certain demographic of our students in our school, because classrooms will vary on demographics of our students, and therefore help close that gap.

Short-Term Goal 3: Close student voting rates by 5% over 2020 rates with the following demographics as identified through our NSLVE data:

- **Age ranges of 22-24 and 25-29.**
- **Students who identify as Black, Asian, and Hispanic.**
- **Degree areas of Computer Science, Visual and Performing Arts, and Business.**

S- Our goal specifies a percentage and the specific demographics we will target.

M- Long-term tracking is through NSLVE (National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement), but for short-term tracking, we are creating a survey to ask these students to figure out why there is a gap between their peers.

A- By polling our students through email and/or attending club/small community meetings related to the demographic we are polling, to help gain the connection and decrease the gap.

R- Through our CBL assistant Sarah, and past/future NSLVE data, we will be able to keep track of voting gaps based on our student demographics using the 2020 data and by contacting those communities by identity-based groups. We are enrolled in the 2024 NSLVE to be able to easily gather the demographic voting data.

T- By the end of the end of the summer 2024 semester, we will finalize our report from the surveys in understanding what we can do in the fall to help connect with specific demographics when doing civic voter engagement.

I- There is a gap between voters of color and white voters. We should use resources to connect with these voters, bring them into the conversation and be able to have a clearer understanding of how many voters of color are registered and voting.

E- By reaching out to students that are normally not polled will help give voice to demographics not normally polled.

Long-Term Goal 1: Make our campus an early voting site.

S- Inver Hills Community College will be an early voting site.

M- Contact Election officials and our state government statue to be a campus host for an early voting site.

A- This goal will be attainable in the long term with the help of college administrators and Minnesota state government.

R- This is relevant in helping our community college student body have easier access to vote and serve the larger community.

T- Within the next 25-26 or 26-27 fiscal years, to have our campus to be an early voting site.

I- Being inclusive to students to make it easier for them to vote and serve those with barriers to voting.

E- Being equitable to students who have issues with being able to vote, whether its safety concerns based on gender, race, etc. And/or related to Transportation or disabilities. To have an easier and safer option for students to come to campus where they take classes and to vote, without concerns on how to vote other ways or to get to a voting site on Election Day.

Long-Term Goal 2: Build Election Day into the academic calendar.

S- Inver Hills Community College will be tasked by the Voting Coalition with building Election Day into its academic calendar.

M- This goal is being measured by continuedly keeping track of all emails/meetings necessary to get Election Day into our academic calendar.

A- Confident that this goal will be attainable for our students, to give them a day to be able to go vote, and not worry about having to come to campus, and work around their work/class hours.

R- It is relevant because there have been concerns about a student's access to vote while also expected to attend classes and/or work that day on campus, and how that might hinder their time/availability to vote. Especially if they are not aware of early vote options.

T- Our goal is to have Election Day on our academic calendars by either the 25-26 or 26-27 academic year.

I- By including the department of Diversity Equity Inclusion Justice and Belonging, Veterans Services, and Student Life to work together with their calendars, to make sure their events/holidays are being promoted and contact college administrators together to make sure everyone and everything is included.

E- With adding Election Day into our academic calendar, it will help remove any barriers for our students to have more access during Election Day to go out and vote.

STRATEGY

Our strategy is to leverage the diverse functional areas and spheres of influence of our coalition to “Ask Every Student” to register to vote, and to think critically about barriers students face to fully participating in our democracy, and form our outreach tactics to address those barriers.

Our strategies were identified through multiple meetings of our coalition, as well as ongoing research and work by our civic engagement work study employees.

Our strategies are supported by resources from our partners. We plan to apply for any available grant opportunities. As of 5/29/24, we received a \$5000 *Ask Every Student* implementation grant that will fund student voting ambassadors and the faculty champion incentive stipends. We will utilize materials and resources provided by national partners to assist us with communications and events. We also rely heavily on our secretary of state’s website, mnvotes.org.

Election Officials Partnership

In June 2024, the CBL Coordinator will follow up communication with previously contacted local election officials to continue the conversation into actionable steps. The meeting agendas will focus on how Inver Hills can help cities recruit election workers, and inviting local election officials to our voter registration, outreach and education events.

Paid Student “Voting Ambassadors”

The CBL Coordinator will post, hire, and train student voting ambassadors to increase student voice and representation in the coalition and the execution of the action plan. Ambassadors will be funded through federal work study, and use grant funding for stipends for students who are ineligible for work study. Advertising of these positions and hiring will take place during the summer with the goal of having students hired and trained by the first day of the fall semester.

Voting Ambassadors will visit classes (online and in person) to talk about how to register to vote, where to find info about where to vote and what’s on the ballot, and why students should vote in a midterm election. Ambassadors will also table at campus events and in campus buildings, help to plan and run Civic Holidays events, visit club meetings, and have flexibility to implement their own ideas.

Institution-Wide Communication

There are several people in the coalition who are responsible for campus communication, including the Interactive Media Coordinator (member of the Marketing department) and the Director of Student Life. These two, with the support of the CBL Coordinator, will update campus-wide communication avenues with information and graphics related to voter registration, education and turnout:

- Social media, especially surrounding Civic Holidays

- Bi-weekly student newsletter from Student Life (emailed to all registered students)
- D2L (learning management platform) announcement
- Update information on the college web site
- Official college email to all registered students specifically about voting, will request to be signed by the college president
- Include important voting-related dates on the college calendar

Large-Scale Campus Event Integration

Inver Hills coordinates campus-wide, cross-collaborative events targeting students each fall semester, including KickOff, Welcome Week, and Student Success Day. All three events are chaired by the Director of Student Life, a member of our coalition, but include participation from folks across campus.

KickOff – takes place the Thursday before the semester starts and is a community-college version of orientation. Our coalition will host a table at the Info Fair to register students to vote and recruit Voting Ambassadors.

Welcome Week – a week of social events to foster connection and belonging among students. Voting Ambassadors and other coalition members will attend events to register students to vote.

Student Success Day – a full-day conference for students that occurs in September and February each year. Classes are not held so that students can attend. There is a keynote speaker and breakout sessions throughout the day. The coalition is proposing that the keynote speaker is related to democracy (for example, the executive director of Common Cause Minnesota) and that there is a track at the conference related to democratic engagement.

Faculty Engagement

Because of the landscape of our college and the demographics of our students, our coalition believes that increased and deeper engagement in the classroom is an effective strategy to reaching more students. As a small college, we generally know which faculty are engaged and supportive, but we do not have any data to use to work intentionally toward increasing engagement.

The *Ask Every Student* Implementation grant will implement a stipend-based faculty champion program for fall 2024. Faculty will be incentivized to earn points by incorporating suggested nonpartisan voter engagement activities into their classroom:

Syllabus Statement on Voting and D2L Module 10 points

Students will directly receive information they need to know about voting in the upcoming election from the syllabus and course D2L site. Your responsibility: sharing provided sample language with your students in the syllabus for each of your courses, providing student with voting D2L module.

Class Announcements 20 points

Make a class announcement about upcoming deadlines or democratic engagement opportunities on campus in the beginning of class each week. Your responsibility: verbally relay updates sent to you about upcoming dates and deadlines related to the election and promote other democratic engagement opportunities.

Classroom Presentation 30 points

Students receive a short live explanation of the voting and democratic engagement process and have the opportunity to ask questions and get advice from someone on our team during a class call. Your responsibility: set aside 5 minutes of class time and coordinate with someone from our team to visit your classroom OR give the presentation yourself.

Attend 75 Min. Faculty Development Workshop 50 points

Faculty will learn new information and easy-to-use strategies that will help every student become election ready – including registering to vote and/or checking registration status, election deadlines, Vote by Mail directions, finding non-partisan information about candidates and ballot issues, making a plan to vote, and much more.

Including Democratic Engagement in your Syllabus 50 points

Students will learn about how democratic engagement relates to the content of your class and take part in an assignment to dive deeper. Your responsibility: create an assignment related to democratic engagement or choose one of our own to incorporate into your class syllabus. The CBL Coordinator and the faculty of the voting coalition are available to support its development.

Civic Holidays

Inver Hills is signed up to be a campus partner for Campus Takeover, including National Voter Registration Day, Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day. We will use the media content created by the civic holiday partners to include it in our campus/student communications, and do a combination of in-person and online events for each civic holiday, such as free food, bingo and other games, etc.

Educational Events

Registration and education will be woven into all of the strategies already mentioned, but our coalition will plan events to complement existing campus events and civic holidays. We plan to partner with [Braver Angels](#) to host workshops on “how to disagree better”. Student Success Day, an annual day-long student conference in September, will have a civic engagement track. Additional educational events we plan to offer include:

- “It’s Not Just the President” – help students find out what’s on their ballot with an emphasis on local races and ballot questions
- Debate watch party
- Civic conversation cafes
- Your Major on the Ballot – partnership with academic disciplines, targeting the goal areas for closing voting rate gaps
- Media Literacy

- Post-Election Debrief

Long-Term Goals Strategy

The Minnesota Secretary of State's office is interested in working with any campus who would like to become an early voting site. The first step is to reach out to the SOS office and find out what support can be provided, and if there is advice in working towards this goal. After identifying the steps to becoming an early voting site, campus leadership will receive a proposal from our voting coalition to approve.

Our campus has a couple days each semester set aside for faculty development and classes are canceled. These days are set by a calendar committee. The faculty on the voting coalition are interested and willing to approach the calendar committee, faculty union, and Vice President of Academic Affairs to ask for Election Day to be a faculty development day, therefore allowing students a day to dedicate to voting. This will also send a message to our campus that this day is important to our campus culture.

REPORTING

Our coalition will continue to meet regularly in order to update short- and long-term goals in real time.

The action plan, NSLVE data and related reports will be shared to stakeholders in the following ways:

- Emailed to campus administration
- Faculty and staff invited to a “civic café” discussion in the first weeks of the semester to introduce the coalition and the work plan, and continue to offer monthly civic cafes throughout the semester
- Faculty voting registration and education workshops (as part of the incentive program)
- Report to the faculty union by our faculty coalition members
- Report to student affairs at a division-wide meeting
- Posted on the Inver Hills Community-Based Learning website
- Incorporated into training of student voting ambassadors, Student Senate leadership training, and club meetings where we are inviting participation in voter engagement efforts

Following Election Day, we will hold open forums/presentations to summarize and reflect on our efforts, document suggestions for improvement from our stakeholders, and celebrate our accomplishments.

EVALUATION

Evaluation efforts will be conducted by the coalition. We will rely on the NSLVE for the quantitative results, and our coalition will focus on qualitative data. We will partner with the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge to set up a voter registration portal to track registrations. In past years, we have promoted voter registration through the Secretary of State’s office, but then could not quantify how many registrations we collected.

This summer, in the very beginning stages of plan implementation, our coalition will continue to meet and discuss the evaluation guiding questions in the “Strengthening American Democracy” guide. We will create the evaluation tools that will be used during plan implementation, and get specific about how we will measure success.

At each of the educational events, we will ask participants to complete an evaluation to self-report their learning. Our coalition will review these evaluations at the mid-point to see if we need to make any adjustments to our programming or outreach. Because we will have folks from across the leadership team responsible for these educational events, there will be a wide variety of people responsible for evaluation.

Following the plan implementation, we will review the program evaluations but also review the strategies themselves, by asking questions such as, “Did we successfully implement the *Ask Every Student* strategies?” and “What opportunities to embed voter engagement into campus life did we miss?”

We will share our evaluation findings through the same avenues and to the same audiences as listed under reporting. This information will be used to inform our next round of short- and long-term goals and the direction of our campus coalition.