

# Inverhills Community College

**ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE  
VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS DESIGNATION  
CIVIC ACTION PLAN 2022**

## **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 (facilitator)
- Kimberly Newton, Director of Student Life
- Rae Dillon, Academic Advisor
- Alicia Atwater, TRIO
- Jeremy Clark, Equity Coordinator
- Rachel Marzahn, Interactive Media Coordinator
- Elsbeth Howe, Foundation Development Director

### Faculty:

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

### Students:

- Emma Kirby, Student Senate Director of Communications and CBL Assistant
- Ashley Carlson, Student Senate Vice President
- Karina Villeda, Student Senate Director of Finance
- Jason Cooke, Student Senate Director of Legislative Affairs
- Ashton Neal, Student Senator

### Administration:

- Rachel Roberson, Vice President of Equity and Inclusion

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 past years, the campus civic action plan was written by two student affairs staff and the Student Senate, although there has always been broad support across campus for democratic engagement. In order to diversify the stakeholders involved in the creation of the action plan and to move towards further institutionalization of civic engagement, a work group of students, staff, faculty and administrators came together to create the 2022 plan. The coalition was formed with energy coming from the recognition from the ALL IN challenge for highest student voter rate at a community college in the 2020 election, as well as a new strategic plan for the institution that names “community engagement” as a value and priority.

In order to make this plan as equitable as possible, all students, faculty, staff and administrators were invited to participate and we have representation from each of those stakeholder groups. During our first meetings, we reviewed NSLVE data to identify demographics of students that are underrepresented in registration and voting numbers and brainstormed ways to reach those students through our action plan.

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) and is focused on short-term goals through the 2022 elections. However, the work group has been discussing long-term goals around institutionalization and some of those ideas have been included in this action plan.

The IHCC Community-Based Learning Coordinator, 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 civic and democratic engagement, but those efforts were not coordinated or institutionalized. The college invests in a part-time staff member to lead community-based learning and that individual has been working over the past four years to identify these leaders and their individual efforts. A coalition of these leaders from across campus is forming in spring 2022 with the initial charge of developing and executing this action plan, with a long-term goal of the coalition becoming the centralized work group for campus civic engagement.

There are stakeholders in the coalition from all divisions on campus – academic affairs (political science, sociology, physical science, communications), student affairs (community-based learning, academic advising, TRIO, Student Life), Marketing, Foundation, Equity & Inclusion, and student leaders.

Support from national and local partners have been instrumental in our success. In the past three years, we have participated in and used resources from Ask Every Student and the ALL IN Democracy Challenge to guide the overall strategy. IHCC is a member of Minnesota & Iowa Campus Compact 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 planning a weekly anti-racism challenge for faculty and staff and plan to include voter suppression education as one week's theme. 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 does 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.

## 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 the Vice President of Equity and Inclusion who attends coalition meetings and actively contributed to the action plan strategies. Our college president, Michael Berndt, joined the ALL IN Presidents Council and has always been a strong advocate for civic engagement.

Despite strong support from campus leadership, civic learning and democratic engagement is disjointed across campus. The formation of this coalition is one step towards addressing this. Civic learning and democratic engagement 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 democratic engagement learning.

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. Leading up to the 2020 election, voter registration information was posted as an announcement in D2L, our learning management software that every student accesses, and official college email was sent to every student with specific voting information. 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.

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. 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 2021, there were 2620 students enrolled taking courses for credit. This is the equivalent of 834.8 full-time students.
- 43% were returning students
- 57% were continuing students
- 40% were Students of Color (SOC)
- 19% came from a home where neither parent had any college
- 50% came from a home where neither parent had a bachelor's degree
- 28% 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 focus on resources from the Minnesota Secretary of State website where students can look up their polling location, sample ballot, etc.

Despite these challenges, Inver Hills Community College was recognized by the ALL IN 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. Inver Hills conducted the CCSSE in spring 2022 but have not yet received the data. The coalition reviewed our NSLVE data to set our goals and strategies for 2022.

## 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 2022 civic action plan, we are focusing on the 2018 NSLVE data and basing our goals on increasing those percentages, since historically folks do not participate in midterms to the same degree as presidential election years.

## GOALS AND STRATEGY

Our coalition set three goals for the 2022 elections:

1. Increase voter registration by 5% over 2018 election
2. Increase voter rate of registered voters by 5% over 2018 election
3. Hold one event or educational outreach effort in the area of voter registration, voter education, or voter turnout during the fall semester leading up to Election Day

	2018	2022 goal
<b>Voter Registration</b>	74.0%	79.0%
<b>Voter Rate</b>	70.8%	75.8%

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 representation from our coalition at the LeadMN Voter Summit in April. At the Voter Summit, our team participated in the Votes and Ballots activity and then pitched our action plan to a group of judges to compete for grant money. Our Inver Hills team tied for first place and received a \$1,000 grant to help us with our action plan.

Our strategies are also supported by resources from our partners. We plan to apply for mini-grants from Campus Takeover and Ask Every Student. 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](http://mnvotes.org).

### **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 we will seek 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. Student Success Day this fall is on National Voter Registration Day.

### **Curricular Integration**

Our coalition faculty members wrote a sample syllabus statement about voting and emailed it to all faculty during finals week to encourage its inclusion in summer and fall syllabi.

Coalition faculty are designing a 15-minute curriculum on the midterm elections that any instructor can teach in their course, or request a member of our coalition/Voting Ambassadors to present in class.

The CBL Coordinator also reaches out to faculty across disciplines to offer ideas and support for integrating community engagement into courses. For example, an interpersonal communications class in fall 2021 and spring 2022 used the “Elections Matter” deliberative dialogue guide from the National Issues Forum to learn about the course subject matter. The CBL Coordinator created a list of ideas on how to integrate democratic engagement across the disciplines that will be distributed to all faculty via email and professional development meetings.

Student Voting Ambassadors will reach out to all faculty to ask about giving five-minute “class raps” about voting. The CBL Coordinator will assist with scheduling.

**Civic Holidays**

Inver Hills is signed up to be a campus partner for National Voter Registration Day, Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day. Student Life has historically done programming for Constitution 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.

**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 will plan these events to meet our goal of one educational event every week of the fall semester leading up to Election Day.

It is within this calendar of events that the coalition has the opportunity to partner with student clubs, community partners, and others. It is within this calendar that we have opportunity to explore the social justice aspects of voting and voter suppression, current events as well as history.

This is a sample calendar of events we are interested in hosting. Events will be held in person and online in order to be accessible to all students, and open to the broader community when possible.

<b>Week of...</b>	<b>Notable Event</b>	<b>Educational Event Idea</b>
August 15	Kick Off	Table at Info Fair Introduce incentive program for attending the voting series
August 22	Welcome Week	Table at Club Fair Introduce incentive program for attending the voting series
August 29	<b>Aug. 28, 1963:</b> People from across the country gather	Lunch & Learn to watch speech and discuss

	for March on Washington where John Lewis delivers the SNCC speech.	
September 5		Host student discussion with a state organization focused on equity and voting (e.g. State Voices Minnesota)
September 12	Constitution Day	Weave voting rights amendments into Constitution Day education/programming
September 19	NVRD/Student Success Day	SSD Keynote speaker, breakout sessions
September 29		Campus forum with candidates on the ballot
October 3	National Voter Education Week	Daily social media campaign Ballot Parties Open forums on ballot questions
October 10		Deliberative dialogue – “How do we encourage and safeguard voting?”
October 17		TRIO Cultural Dialogue on a voting-related topic picked by TRIO students
October 24	Vote Early Day  IHCC Anti-Racism Weekly Challenge	Social media infographics  Voting Rights theme for this week’s challenge Panel on barriers to voting access both past and present
October 31		Student photo and video contest – “I Vote Because....” And distribute timely info about Election Day voting
November 7	Election Day	Puppies to the Polls GOTV tabling Celebration/party to distribute prizes from participation/incentive program

### Long-Term Goals

The coalition has not officially set long-term goals as of the writing of this action plan, but there is desire to make ongoing, intentional efforts to institutionalize civic engagement at Inver Hills Community College.

One potential goal is to make this civic engagement work group an officially recognized committee of the college. Taking this step would ensure that there is ongoing representation and structure regardless of turnover of the current membership.

## **REPORTING**

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

This action plan 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
- Report to the faculty union by our faculty coalition members
- Report to student affairs at a division-wide meeting
- Emailed to our community partners at LeadMN and Campus Compact
- Posted on the 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

We will give an update to our stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, administrators, community partners and public audiences) in October.

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.

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 weekly 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 are including educational events that directly discuss racialized voter suppression and other equity-related topics; did our efforts make any difference? This can partially be evaluated by the participant evaluations but will also come from subjective opinions from the coalition leadership team.

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.